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H. DE BALZAC

A HARLOT'S PROGRESS

(*Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes*)

VOL. II

Translated by

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with a Preface by

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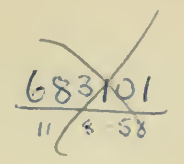


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PREFACE

As has been noted in the Introduction to the first volume of the *Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes*, *La dernière Incarnation de Vautrin*, though forming, according to the author's conception, an integral part of that work, stands in more ways than one aloof from it. It was much later written than the earlier parts, except *Ou mènent les mauvais Chemins*, and it was later written even than that. Moreover, it marks in two different ways a much maturer stage of the author's ideas as to heroic convicts—a stage in which, I think, it is not fanciful to detect a considerable reduction of the gigantesque element and a substitution of something else for it.

We may note this in two ways. In the earlier conception of the matter, as exemplified chiefly in *Ferragus* and *Le Père Goriot*, the heroic element considerably dominates the practical. In the one Balzac had shown an ex-convict defying society and executing a sort of private justice or injustice, just as he pleased. In the other he had adopted (and had maintained still later in an apologetic epistle to a newspaper editor, which will be found in his works) a notion of the criminal as of a sort of *puissance du mal* pervading and dominating society itself.

In the present book, or section of a book, which, it must never be forgotten, was one of his very latest, things are adjusted to a much more actual level. The thieves'-latin which it contains is only an indirect symptom of this. Ainsworth in England and others in France had anticipated him notably in this. But indirectly it shows us that he had come down many stages from his earlier heights. Bourignard and the early Vautrin worked in clouds, afar and apart; they had little to do with actual life: in *La dernière Incarnation de Vautrin* we find ourselves face to face with the actual, or only slightly 'dis-realised' realities of convict life. Some of these details may be disgusting, but most of them, as we know from unromantic authorities, are tolerably true; and where truth is, there, with an artist like Balzac, art never fails. It is the drawback of the youthful poet or novelist that he is insufficiently provided with veracity, of the aging novelist or poet that inspiration and the faculty of turning fact into great fiction fail him. But there was no danger of this latter with the author, at nearly twenty years' interval, of *Le dernier Chouan* and *La Cousine Bette.* He could only gain by the dispelling of illusion, and he could not lose by the practice of his craft.

Another and still more interesting mark of resipiscence is conveyed in the practical defeat of Vautrin and in his desertion to the side of society itself, which, we are given to understand, he never afterwards left, nor less perhaps in the virtual rebuff which Corentin (another *héros du mal* of the older time) receives at the end. The old betrayer of Mlle. de Verneuil is told in so many words that he can be dispensed with; the old enemy of society has to take its wages; the funds of *la haute pègre*

are squandered on Lucien de Rubempré, just as any foolish heir might squander them, and the whole scheme of a conspiracy against order breaks down. True, Madame de Maufrigneuse and Madame de Sérizy get their letters; but that is neither here nor there.

The most interesting scene in the book, I suppose, is that in which the scheme of the prison authorities for trapping Vautrin fails by dint of his adroitness, and the command of a strong mind over a weak one, as between him and the other convicts, to whom he had been a fraudulent trustee. It is not free from unsavoury details, but the mastery of it quite exceeds its repulsiveness. It is worth noting, too, that Balzac shows how thoroughly he has mastered the principles of his art by intermixing this very success with evidences of Vautrin's humanity after all. And of minor details there is not, I think, one more interesting in the book, while there are few more interesting in all Balzac, than the fact that in the opening interview between Camusot and his wife the author borrows from *Guy Mannering* the incident of Pleydell's discovering the importance of Dirk Hatteraick's pocket-book by the play of his countenance as his examiner passes from that to other things, and *vice versâ*. The fact is that Balzac was to the very last an ardent devotee of Sir Walter, and that—like all great novelists, I think, without exception, but not like M. Zola and some other persons both abroad and at home—he was perfectly alive to the fact that Scott's workmanship, his analysis, his knowledge of human nature, and his use of it, are about as far from superficiality as the equator is from the pole. In construction and in style Scott was careless, and as it happens, Balzac was in neither respect

impeccable. But in other ways the pupil had, and knew that he had, little advantage over the master except in a certain parade of motives and details, as well as (though not to a very great extent) in a greater comprehension of passion, and, of course, to a much greater extent in liberty of exhibiting that comprehension. Let us read Balzac and admire Balzac as much as possible; but when any one talks of Scott as shallow in comparison with Balzac, let us leave the answer to Balzac himself.

(For bibliography, see Preface to *Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes.*)

G. S.

A HARLOT'S PROGRESS

THE END OF EVIL WAYS

At six o'clock next morning two vehicles with postillions, prison vans, called in the vigorous language of the populace *paniers à salade*, came out of La Force to drive to the Conciergerie by the Palais de Justice.

Few loafers in Paris can have failed to meet this prison cell on wheels; still, though most stories are written for Parisian readers, strangers will no doubt be satisfied to have a description of this formidable machine. Who knows? The police of Russia, Germany, or Austria, the legal body of countries to whom the 'Salad-basket' is an unknown machine, may profit by it; and in several foreign countries there can be no doubt that an imitation of this vehicle would be a boon to prisoners.

This ignominious conveyance, yellow-bodied, on high wheels, and lined with sheet-iron, is divided into two compartments. In front is a box-seat, with leather cushions and an apron. This is the free seat of the van, and accommodates a sheriff's officer and a gendarme. A strong iron trellis, reaching to the top, separates this sort of cab-front from the back division, in which there are two wooden seats placed sideways, as in an omnibus, on which the prisoners sit. They get in by a step behind and a door, with no window. The nickname of Salad-basket arose from the fact that the vehicle was originally made entirely of lattice, and the prisoners were shaken in it just as a salad is shaken to dry it.

For further security, in case of accident, a mounted gendarme follows the machine, especially when it conveys criminals condemned to death to the place of execution. Thus escape is impossible. The vehicle, lined with sheet-iron, is impervious to any tool. The prisoners, carefully searched when they are arrested or locked up, can have nothing but watch-springs, perhaps, to file through bars, and useless on a smooth surface.

So the *panier à salade*, improved by the genius of the Paris police, became the model for the prison omnibus (known in London as 'Black Maria') in which convicts are transported to the hulks, instead of the horrible tumbril which formerly disgraced civilisation, though Manon Lescaut has made it famous.

The accused are, in the first instance, despatched in the prison van from the various prisons in Paris to the Palais de Justice, to be questioned by the examining judge. This, in prison slang, is called 'going up for examination.' Then the accused are again conveyed from prison to the Court to be sentenced when their case is only a misdemeanour; or if, in legal parlance, the case is one for the Upper Court, they are transferred from the house of detention to the Conciergerie, the 'Newgate' of the Department of the Seine.

Finally, the prison van carries the criminal condemned to death from Bicêtre to the Barrière Saint-Jacques, where executions are carried out, and have been ever since the Revolution of July. Thanks to philanthropic interference, the poor wretches no longer have to face the horrors of the drive from the Conciergerie to the Place de Grève in a cart exactly like that used by wood merchants. This cart is no longer used but to bring the body back from the scaffold.

Without this explanation the words of a famous convict to his accomplice, 'It is now the horse's business!' as he got into the van, would be unintelligible. It is

impossible to be carried to execution more comfortably than in Paris nowadays.

At this moment the two vans, setting out at such an early hour, were employed on the unwonted service of conveying two accused prisoners from the gaol of La Force to the Conciergerie, and each man had a 'Salad-basket' to himself.

Nine-tenths of my readers, ay, and nine-tenths of the remaining tenth, are certainly ignorant of the vast difference of meaning in the words incriminated, suspected, accused, and committed for trial—gaol, house of detention, and penitentiary; and they may be surprised to learn here that it involves all our criminal procedure, of which a clear and brief outline will presently be sketched, as much for their information as for the elucidation of this history. However, when it is said that the first van contained Jacques Collin and the second Lucien, who in a few hours had fallen from the summit of social splendour to the depths of a prison cell, curiosity will for the moment be satisfied.

The conduct of the two accomplices was characteristic; Lucien de Rubempré shrank back to avoid the gaze of the passers-by, who looked at the grated window of the gloomy and fateful vehicle on its road along the Rue Saint-Antoine and the Rue du Martroi to reach the quay and the Arch of Saint-Jean, the way, at that time, across the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville. This archway now forms the entrance gate to the residence of the Préfet de la Seine in the huge municipal palace. The daring convict, on the contrary, stuck his face against the barred grating, between the officer and the gendarme, who, sure of their van, were chatting together.

The great days of July 1830, and the tremendous storm that then burst, have so completely wiped out the memory of all previous events, and politics so entirely absorbed the French during the last six months of that year, that no one remembers—or a few scarcely remember

—the various private, judicial, and financial catastrophes, strange as they were, which, forming the annual food of Parisian curiosity, were not lacking during the first six months of the year. It is, therefore, needful to mention how Paris was, for the moment, excited by the news of the arrest of a Spanish priest, discovered in a courtesan's house, and that of the elegant Lucien de Rubempré, who had been engaged to Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu, taken on the high road to Italy, close to the little village of Grez. Both were charged as being concerned in a murder, of which the profits were stated at seven millions of francs; and for some days the scandal of this trial preponderated over the absorbing importance of the last elections held under Charles x.

In the first place, the charge had been based on an application by the Baron de Nucingen; then, Lucien's apprehension, just as he was about to be appointed private secretary to the Prime Minister, made a stir in the very highest circles of society. In every drawing-room in Paris more than one young man could recollect having envied Lucien when he was honoured by the notice of the beautiful Duchesse de Maufrigneuse; and every woman knew that he was the favoured attaché of Madame de Sérizy, the wife of one of the Government bigwigs. And finally, his handsome person gave him a singular notoriety in the various worlds that make up Paris—the world of fashion, the financial world, the world of courtesans, the young men's world, the literary world. So for two days past all Paris had been talking of these two arrests. The examining judge in whose hands the case was put regarded it as a chance for promotion; and, to proceed with the utmost possible rapidity, he had given orders that both the accused should be transferred from La Force to the Conciergerie as soon as Lucien de Rubempré could be brought from Fontainebleau.

As the Abbé Carlos had spent but twelve hours in La Force, and Lucien only half a night, it is useless to describe that prison, which has since been entirely remodelled; and as to the details of their consignment, it would be only a repetition of the same story at the Conciergerie.

But before setting forth the terrible drama of a criminal inquiry, it is indispensable, as I have said, that an account should be given of the ordinary proceedings in a case of this kind. To begin with, its various phases will be better understood at home and abroad, and, besides, those who are ignorant of the action of the criminal law, as conceived of by the lawgivers under Napoleon, will appreciate it better. This is all the more important as, at this moment, this great and noble institution is in danger of destruction by the system known as *penitentiary*.

A crime is committed; if it is flagrant, the persons incriminated (*inculpés*) are taken to the nearest lock-up and placed in the cell known to the vulgar as the *Violon*—perhaps because they make a noise there, shrieking or crying. From thence the suspected persons (*inculpés*) are taken before the police commissioner or magistrate, who holds a preliminary inquiry, and can dismiss the case if there is any mistake; finally, they are conveyed to the Dépôt of the Préfecture, where the police detains them pending the convenience of the public prosecutor and the examining judge. They, being served with due notice, more or less quickly, according to the gravity of the case, come and examine the prisoners who are still provisionally detained. Having due regard to the presumptive evidence, the examining judge then issues a warrant for their imprisonment, and sends the suspected persons to be confined in a gaol. There are three such gaols (Maisons d'Arrêt) in Paris—Sainte-Pélagie, La Force, and les Madelonnettes.

Observe the word *inculpé* incriminated, or suspected of crime. The French Code has created three essential degrees of criminality—*inculpé*, first degree of suspicion; *prévenu*, under examination; *accusé*, fully committed for trial. So long as the warrant for committal remains unsigned, the supposed criminal is regarded as merely under suspicion, *inculpé* of the crime or felony; when the warrant has been issued, he becomes 'the accused' (*prévenu*), and is regarded as such so long as the inquiry is proceeding; when the inquiry is closed, and as soon as the Court has decided that the accused is to be committed for trial, he becomes 'the prisoner at the bar' (*accusé*) as soon as the superior Court, at the instance of the public prosecutor, has pronounced that the charge is so far proved as to be carried to the Assizes.

Thus, persons suspected of crime go through three different stages, three siftings, before coming up for trial before the judges of the upper Court—the High Justice of the realm.

At the first stage, innocent persons have abundant means of exculpating themselves—the public, the town watch, the police. At the second stage they appear before a magistrate face to face with the witnesses, and are judged by a tribunal in Paris, or by the collective Court in the departments. At the third stage they are brought before a bench of twelve councillors, and in case of any error or informality the prisoner committed for trial at the Assizes may appeal for protection to the Supreme Court. The jury do not know what a slap in the face they give to popular authority, to administrative and judicial functionaries, when they acquit a prisoner. And so, in my opinion, it is hardly possible that an innocent man should ever find himself at the bar of an Assize Court in Paris—I say nothing of other seats of justice.

The *détenu* is the convict. French criminal law recognises imprisonment of three degrees, corresponding

in legal distinction to these three degrees of suspicion, inquiry, and conviction. Mere imprisonment is a light penalty for misdemeanour, but *détention* is imprisonment with hard labour, a severe and sometimes degrading punishment. Hence, those persons who nowadays are in favour of the penitentiary system would upset an admirable scheme of criminal law in which the penalties are judiciously graduated, and they will end by punishing the lightest peccadilloes as severely as the greatest crimes.

The reader may compare in the *Scenes of Political Life* (for instance, in *Une Ténébreuse affaire*) the curious differences subsisting between the criminal law of Brumaire in the year IV., and that of the Code Napoléon which has taken its place.

In most great trials, as in this one, the suspected persons are at once examined (and from *inculpés* become *prévenus*); justice immediately issues a warrant for their arrest and imprisonment. In point of fact, in most of such cases the criminals have either fled, or have been instantly apprehended. Indeed, as we have seen, the police, which is but an instrument, and the officers of justice had descended on Esther's house with the swiftness of a thunderbolt. Even if there had not been the reasons for revenge suggested to the superior police by Corentin, there was a robbery to be investigated of seven hundred and fifty thousand francs from the Baron de Nucingen.

Just as the first prison van, conveying Jacques Collin, reached the archway of Saint-Jean—a narrow, dark passage, some block ahead compelled the postillion to stop under the vault. The prisoner's eyes shone like carbuncles through the grating, in spite of his aspect as of a dying man, which, the day before, had led the governor of La Force to believe that the doctor must be called in. These flaming eyes, free to rove at this moment, for neither the officer nor the gendarme looked

round at their 'customer,' spoke so plain a language that a clever examining judge, M. Popinot, for instance, would have identified the man convicted for sacrilege.

In fact, ever since the 'salad-basket' had turned out of the gate of La Force, Jacques Collin had studied everything on his way. Notwithstanding the pace they had made, he took in the houses with an eager and comprehensive glance, from the ground floor to the attics. He saw and noted every passer-by. God Himself is not more clear-seeing as to the means and end of His creatures than this man in observing the slightest differences in the medley of things and people. Armed with hope, as the last of the Horatii was armed with his sword, he expected help. To anybody but this Machiavelli of the hulks, this hope would have seemed so absolutely impossible to realise that he would have gone on mechanically, as all guilty men do. Not one of them ever dreams of resistance when he finds himself in the position to which justice and the Paris police bring suspected persons, especially those who, like Collin and Lucien, are in solitary confinement.

It is impossible to conceive of the sudden isolation in which a suspected criminal is placed. The gendarmes who apprehend him, the commissioner who questions him, those who take him to prison, the warders who lead him to his cell—which is actually called a *cachot*, a dungeon or hiding-place, those again who take him by the arms to put him into a prison-van—every being that comes near him from the moment of his arrest is either speechless, or takes note of all he says, to be repeated to the police or to the judge. This total severance, so simply effected between the prisoner and the world, gives rise to a complete overthrow of his faculties and a terrible prostration of mind, especially when the man has not been familiarised by his antecedents with the processes of justice. The duel between the judge and the criminal is all the more appalling because justice has on its side

the dumbness of blank walls and the incorruptible coldness of its agents.

But Jacques Collin, or Carlos Herrera—it will be necessary to speak of him by one or the other of these names according to the circumstances of the case—had long been familiar with the methods of the police, of the gaol, and of justice. This colossus of cunning and corruption had employed all his powers of mind, and all the resources of mimicry, to affect the surprise and anility of an innocent man, while giving the lawyers the spectacle of his sufferings. As has been told, Asie, that skilled Locusta, had given him a dose of poison so qualified as to produce the effects of a dreadful illness.

Thus Monsieur Camusot, the police commissioner, and the public prosecutor had been baffled in their proceedings and inquiries by the effects apparently of an apoplectic attack.

'He has taken poison!' cried Monsieur Camusot, horrified by the sufferings of the self-styled priest when he had been carried down from the attic writhing in convulsions.

Four constables had with great difficulty brought the Abbé Carlos downstairs to Esther's room, where the lawyers and the gendarmes were assembled.

'That was the best thing he could do if he should be guilty,' replied the public prosecutor.

'Do you believe that he is ill?' the police commissioner asked.

The police is always incredulous.

The three lawyers had spoken, as may be imagined, in a whisper; but Jacques Collin had guessed from their faces the subject under discussion, and had taken advanvantage of it to make the first brief examination which is gone through on arrest absolutely impossible and useless; he had stammered out sentences in which Spanish and French were so mingled as to make nonsense.

At La Force this farce had been all the more successful in the first instance because the head of the 'safety' force—an abbreviation of the title 'Head of the brigade of the guardians of public safety'—Bibi-Lupin, who had long since taken Jacques Collin into custody at Madame Vauquer's boarding-house, had been sent on special business into the country, and his deputy was a man who hoped to succeed him, but to whom the convict was unknown.

Bibi-Lupin, himself formerly a convict, and a comrade of Jacques Collin's on the hulks, was his personal enemy. This hostility had its rise in quarrels in which Jacques Collin had always got the upper hand, and in the supremacy over his fellow-prisoners which Trompe-la-Mort had always assumed. And then, for ten years now, Jacques Collin had been the ruling providence of released convicts in Paris, their head, their adviser, and their banker, and consequently Bibi-Lupin's antagonist.

Thus, though placed in solitary confinement, he trusted to the intelligent and unreserved devotion of Asie, his right hand, and perhaps, too, to Paccard, his left hand, who, as he flattered himself, might return to his allegiance when once that thrifty subaltern had safely bestowed the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs that he had stolen. This was the reason why his attention had been so superhumanly alert all along the road. And, strange to say! his hopes were about to be amply fulfilled.

The two solid side-walls of the archway were covered, to a height of six feet, with a permanent dado of mud formed of the splashes from the gutter; for, in those days, the foot passenger had no protection from the constant traffic of vehicles and from what was called the kicking of the carts, but curbstones placed upright at intervals, and much ground away by the naves of the wheels. More than once a heavy truck had crushed a heedless foot-passenger under that archway. Such indeed Paris remained in many districts and till long after.

This circumstance may give some idea of the narrowness of the Saint-Jean gate and the ease with which it could be blocked. If a cab should be coming through from the Place de Grève while a costermonger-woman was pushing her little truck of apples in from the Rue du Martroi, a third vehicle of any kind produced difficulties. The foot-passengers fled in alarm, seeking a corner-stone to protect them from the old-fashioned axles, which had attained such prominence that a law was passed at last to reduce their length.

When the prison van came in, this passage was blocked by a market woman with a costermonger's vegetable cart—one of a type which is all the more strange because specimens still exist in Paris in spite of the increasing number of greengrocers' shops. She was so thoroughly a street hawker that a Sergent de Ville, if that particular class of police had been then in existence, would have allowed her to ply her trade without inspecting her permit, in spite of a sinister countenance that reeked of crime. Her head, wrapped in a cheap and ragged checked cotton kerchief, was horrid with rebellious locks of hair, like the bristles of a wild boar. Her red and wrinkled neck was disgusting, and her little shawl failed entirely to conceal a chest tanned brown by the sun, dust, and mud. Her gown was patchwork; her shoes gaped as though they were grinning at a face as full of holes as the gown. And what an apron! a plaister would have been less filthy. This moving and fetid rag must have stunk in the nostrils of dainty folks ten yards away. Those hands had gleaned a hundred harvest fields. Either the woman had returned from a German witches' Sabbath, or she had come out of a mendicity asylum. But what eyes! what audacious intelligence, what repressed vitality when the magnetic flash of her look and of Jacques Collin's met to exchange a thought!

'Get out of the way, you old vermin-trap!' cried the postillion in harsh tones.

'Mind you don't crush me, you hangman's apprentice!' she retorted. 'Your cartful is not worth as much as mine.'

And by trying to squeeze in between two corner-stones to make way, the hawker managed to block the passage long enough to achieve her purpose.

'Oh! Asie!' said Jacques Collin to himself, at once recognising his accomplice. 'Then all is well.'

The post-boy was still exchanging amenities with Asie, and vehicles were collecting in the Rue du Martroi

'Look out, there—*Pécairé fermati. Souni la—Vedrem*, shrieked old Asie, with the Red-Indian intonations peculiar to these female costermongers, who disfigure their words in such a way that they are transformed in a sort onomatopœia incomprehensible to any but Parisians.

In the confusion in the alley, and among the outcries of all the waiting drivers, no one paid any heed to this wild yell, which might have been the woman's usual cry. But this gibberish, intelligible to Jacques Collin, sent to his ear in a mongrel language of their own—a mixture of bad Italian and Provençal—this important news:—

'Your poor boy is nabbed. I am here to keep an eye on you. We shall meet again.'

In the midst of his joy at having thus triumphed over the police, for he hoped to be able to keep up communications, Jacques Collin had a blow which might have killed any other man.

'Lucien in custody!' said he to himself.

He almost fainted. This news was to him more terrible than the rejection of his appeal could have been if he had been condemned to death.

Now that both the prison vans are rolling along the Quai, the interest of this story requires that I should add a few words about the Conciergerie, while they are making their way thither. The Conciergerie, a his-

torical name—a terrible name—a still more terrible thing, is inseparable from the Revolutions of France, and especially those of Paris. It has known most of our great criminals. But if it is the most interesting of the buildings of Paris, it is also the least known—least known to persons of the upper classes; still, in spite of the interest of this historical digression, it shall be as short as the journey of the prison vans.

What Parisian, what foreigner, or what provincial can have failed to observe the gloomy and mysterious features of the Quai des Lunettes—a structure of black walls flanked by three round towers with conical roofs, two of them almost touching each other? This quay, beginning at the Pont du Change, ends at the Pont Neuf. A square tower—the Clock Tower, or Tour de l'Horloge, whence the signal was given for the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew—a tower almost as tall as that of Saint-Jacques de la Boucherie, shows where the Palais de Justice stands, and forms the corner of the quay.

These four towers and these walls are shrouded in the black winding sheet which, in Paris, falls on every façade to the north. About halfway along the quay at a gloomy archway we see the beginning of the private houses which were built in consequence of the construction of the Pont Neuf in the reign of Henry IV. The Place Royale was a replica of the Place Dauphine. The style of architecture is the same, of brick with binding courses of hewn stone. This archway and the Rue de Harlay are the limit line of the Palais de Justice on the west. Formerly the Préfecture de Police, once the residence of the Presidents of the *Parlement*, was a dependency of the Palace. The Court of Exchequer and Court of Subsidies completed the Supreme Court of Justice, the Sovereign's Court. It will be seen that before the Revolution the Palace enjoyed that isolation which now again is aimed at.

This block, this island of residences and official build-

ings, in their midst the Sainte-Chapelle—that priceless jewel of Saint-Louis' chaplet—is the sanctuary of Paris, its holy place, its sacred ark.

For one thing, this island was at first the whole of the city, for the plot now forming the Place Dauphine was a meadow attached to the Royal demesne, where stood a stamping mill for coining money. Hence the name of Rue de la Monnáie—the street leading to the Pont Neuf. Hence, too, the name of one of the round towers—the middle one—called the Tour d'Argent, which would seem to show that money was originally coined there. The famous mill, to be seen marked in old maps of Paris, may very likely be more recent than the time when money was coined in the Palace itself, and was erected, no doubt, for the practice of improved methods in the art of coining.

The first tower, hardly detached from the Tour d'Argent, is the Tour de Montgomery; the third, and smallest, but the best preserved of the three, for it still has its battlements, is the Tour Bonbec.

The Sainte-Chapelle and its four towers—counting the clock tower as one—clearly define the precincts; or, as a surveyor would say, the perimeter of the Palace, as it was from the time of the Merovingians till the accession of the first race of Valois; but to us, as a result of certain alterations, this Palace is more especially representative of the period of Saint-Louis.

Charles v. was the first to give the Palace up to the *Parlement*, then a new institution, and went to reside in the famous Hôtel Saint-Pol under the protection of the Bastille. The Palais des Tournelles was subsequently erected backing on to the Hôtel Saint-Pol. Thus, under the later Valois, the kings came back from the Bastille to the Louvre, which had been their first stronghold.

The original residence of the French kings, the Palace of Saint-Louis, which has preserved the designation of

Le Palais, to indicate the Palace of palaces, is entirely buried under the Palais de Justice; it forms the cellars, for it was built, like the Cathedral, in the Seine, and with such care that the highest floods in the river scarcely cover the lowest steps. The Quai de l'Horloge covers, twenty feet below the surface, its foundations of a thousand years old. Carriages run on the level of the capitals of the solid columns under these towers, and formerly their appearance must have harmonised with the elegance of the Palace, and have had a picturesque effect over the water, since to this day those towers vie in height with the loftiest buildings in Paris.

As we look down on this vast capital from the lantern of the Pantheon, the Palace with the Sainte-Chapelle is still the most monumental of many monumental buildings. The home of our kings, over which you tread as you pace the immense hall known as the *Salle des Pas perdus*, was a miracle of architecture; and it is so still to the intelligent eye of the poet who happens to study it when inspecting the Conciergerie. Alas! for the Conciergerie has invaded the home of kings. One's heart bleeds to see the way in which cells, cupboards, corridors, warders' rooms, and halls devoid of light or air, have been hewn out of that beautiful structure in which Byzantine, Gothic, and Romanesque—the three phases of ancient art, were harmonised in one building by the architecture of the twelfth century.

This palace is a monumental history of France in the earliest times, just as Blois is that of a later period. As at Blois you may admire in a single courtyard the château of the Counts of Blois, that of Louis XII., that of Francis I., that of Gaston; so at the Conciergerie you will find within the same precincts the stamp of the early races, and, in the Sainte-Chapelle, the architecture of Saint-Louis.

Municipal Council (to you I speak), if you bestow millions, get a poet or two to assist your architects if you

wish to save the cradle of Paris, the cradle of kings, while endeavouring to endow Paris and the Supreme Court with a palace worthy of France. It is a matter for study for some years before beginning the work. Another new prison or two like that of La Roquette, and the palace of Saint-Louis will be safe.

In these days many grievances afflict this vast mass of buildings, buried under the Palais de Justice and the quay, like some antediluvian creature in the soil of Montmartre; but the worst affliction is that it is the Conciergerie. This epigram is intelligible. In the early days of the monarchy, noble criminals—for the villeins (a word signifying the peasantry in French and English alike) and the citizens came under the jurisdiction of the municipality or of their liege lord—the lords of the greater or the lesser fiefs, were brought before the king and guarded in the Conciergerie. And as these noble criminals were few, the Conciergerie was large enough for the king's prisoners.

It is difficult now to be quite certain of the exact site of the original Conciergerie. However, the kitchens built by Saint-Louis still exist, forming what is now called the mouse-trap; and it is probable that the original Conciergerie was situated in the place where, till 1825, the Conciergerie prisons of the *Parlement* were still in use, under the archway to the right of the wide outside steps leading to the supreme Court. From thence, until 1825, condemned criminals were taken to execution. From that gate came forth all the great criminals, all the victims of political feeling. The Maréchale d'Ancre and the Queen of France, Semblançay and Malesherbes, Damien and Danton, Desrues and Castaing. Fouquier Tinville's private room, like that of the public prosecutor now, was so placed that he could see the procession of carts containing the persons whom the Revolutionary tribunal had sentenced to death. Thus this man, who had become a sword, could give a last glance at each batch.

After 1825, when Monsieur de Peyronnet was Minister, a great change was made in the Palais. The old entrance to the Conciergerie, where the ceremonies of registering the criminal and of the last toilet were performed, was closed and removed to where it now is, between the Tour de l'Horloge and the Tour de Montgomery, in an inner court entered through an arched passage. To the left is the 'mousetrap,' to the right the prison gates. The 'salad-baskets' can drive into this irregularly shaped courtyard, can stand there and turn with ease, and in case of a riot find some protection behind the strong grating of the gate under the arch; whereas they formerly had no room to move in the narrow space dividing the outside steps from the right wing of the palace.

In our day the Conciergerie, hardly large enough for the prisoners committed for trial—room being needed for about three hundred, men and women—no longer receives either suspected or remanded criminals excepting in rare cases, as, for instance, in these of Jacques Collin and Lucien. All who are imprisoned there are committed for trial before the Bench. As an exception criminals of the higher ranks are allowed to sojourn there, since, being already disgraced by a sentence in open court, their punishment would be too severe if they served their term of imprisonment at Melun or at Poissy. Ouvrard preferred to be imprisoned at the Conciergerie rather than at Sainte-Pélagie. At this moment of writing Lehon the notary and the Prince de Bergues are serving their time there by an exercise of leniency which, though arbitrary, is humane.

As a rule, suspected criminals, whether they are to be subjected to a preliminary examination—to 'go up,' in the slang of the Courts—or to appear before the magistrate of the lower Court, are transferred in prison vans direct to the 'mousetraps.'

The 'mousetraps,' opposite the gate, consist of a

certain number of cells constructed in the old kitchens of Saint Louis' building, whither prisoners not yet fully committed are brought to await the hour when the Court sits, or the arrival of the examining judge. The 'mousetraps' end on the north at the quay, on the east at the headquarters of the Municipal Guard, on the west at the courtyard of the Conciergerie, and on the south they adjoin a large vaulted hall, formerly, no doubt, the banqueting-room, but at present disused.

Above the 'mousetraps' is an inner guardroom with a window commanding the court of the Conciergerie; this is used by the gendarmerie of the department, and the stairs lead up to it. When the hour of trial strikes the sheriffs call the roll of the prisoners, the gendarmes go down, one for each prisoner, and each gendarme takes a criminal by the arm; and thus, in couples, they mount the stairs, cross the guardroom, and are led along the passages to a room contiguous to the hall where sits the famous sixth chamber of the law (whose functions are those of an English county court). The same road is trodden by the prisoners committed for trial on their way to and from the Conciergerie and the Assize Court.

In the *Salle des Pas-Perdus*, between the door into the first court of the inferior class and the steps leading to the sixth, the visitor must observe the first time he goes there a doorway without a door or any architectural adornment, a square hole of the meanest type. Through this the judges and barristers find their way into the passages, into the guardhouse, down into the prison cells, and to the entrance to the Conciergerie.

The private chambers of all the examining judges are on different floors in this part of the building. They are reached by squalid staircases, a maze in which those to whom the place is unfamiliar inevitably lose themselves. The windows of some look out on the quay, others on the yard of the Conciergerie. In 1830 a few of these rooms commanded the Rue de la Barillerie.

Thus, when a prison van turns to the left in this yard, it has brought prisoners to be examined to the 'mouse-trap'; when it turns to the right, it conveys prisoners committed for trial, to the Conciergerie. Now it was to the right that the vehicle turned which conveyed Jacques Collin to set him down at the prison gate. Nothing can be more sinister. Prisoners and visitors see two barred gates of wrought iron, with a space between them of about six feet. These are never both opened at once, and through them everything is so cautiously scrutinised that persons who have a visiting ticket pass the permit through the bars before the key grinds in the lock. The examining judges, or even the supreme judges, are not admitted without being identified. Imagine, then, the chances of communications or escape !—The governor of the Conciergerie would smile with an expression on his lips that would freeze the mere suggestion in the most daring of romancers who defy probability.

In all the annals of the Conciergerie no escape has been known but that of Lavalette; but the certain fact of august connivance, now amply proven, if it does not detract from the wife's devotion, certainly diminished the risk of failure.

The most ardent lover of the marvellous, judging on the spot of the nature of the difficulties, must admit that at all times the obstacles must have been, as they still are, insurmountable. No words can do justice to the strength of the walls and vaulting; they must be seen.

Though the pavement of the yard is on a lower level than that of the quay, in crossing this barbican you go down several steps to enter an immense vaulted hall, with solid walls graced with magnificent columns. This hall abuts on the Tour de Montgomery—which is now part of the governor's residence—and on the Tour d'Argent, serving as a dormitory for the warders, or porters, or turnkeys, as you may prefer to call them.

The number of the officials is less than might be supposed; there are but twenty; their sleeping quarters, like their beds, are in no respect different from those of the *pistoles* or private cells. The name *pistole* originated, no doubt, in the fact that prisoners formerly paid a pistole (about ten francs) a week for this accommodation, its bareness resembling that of the empty garrets in which great men in poverty begin their career in Paris.

To the left, in the vast entrance hall, sits the Governor of the Conciergerie, in a sort of office constructed of glass panes, where he and his clerk keep the prison-registers. Here the prisoners for examination, or committed for trial, have their names entered with a full description, and are then searched. The question of their lodging is also settled, this depending on the prisoner's means.

Opposite the entrance to this hall there is a glass door. This opens into a parlour where the prisoner's relations and his counsel may speak with him across a double grating of wood. The parlour window opens on to the prison yard, the inner court where prisoners committed for trial take air and exercise at certain fixed hours.

This large hall, only lighted by the doubtful daylight that comes in through the gates—for the single window to the front court is screened by the glass office built out in front of it—has an atmosphere and a gloom that strike the eye in perfect harmony with the pictures that force themselves on the imagination. Its aspect is all the more sinister because, parallel with the Tours d'Argent and de Montgomery, you discover those mysterious vaulted and overwhelming crypts which lead to the cells occupied by the Queen and Madame Elizabeth, and to those known as the secret cells. This maze of masonry, after being of old the scene of royal festivities, is now the basement of the Palais de Justice.

Between 1825 and 1832 the operation of the last toilet was performed in this enormous hall, between a

large stove which heats it and the inner gate. It is impossible even now to tread without a shudder on the paved floor that has received the shock and the confidences of so many last glances.

The apparently dying victim on this occasion could not get out of the horrible vehicle without the assistance of two gendarmes, who took him under the arms to support him, and led him half unconscious into the office. Thus dragged along, the dying man raised his eyes to heaven in such a way as to suggest a resemblance to the Saviour taken down from the Cross. And certainly in no picture does Jesus present a more cadaverous or tortured countenance than this of the sham Spaniard ; he looked ready to breathe his last sigh. As soon as he was seated in the office, he repeated in a weak voice the speech he had made to everybody since he was arrested—

'I appeal to His Excellency the Spanish Ambassador.'

'You can say that to the examining judge,' replied the Governor.

'Oh Lord!' said Jacques Collin, with a sigh. 'But cannot I have a breviary? Shall I never be allowed to see a doctor? I have not two hours to live.'

As Carlos Herrera was to be placed in close confinement in the secret cells, it was needless to ask him whether he claimed the benefits of the *pistole* (as above described), that is to say, the right of having one of the rooms where the prisoner enjoys such comfort as the law permits. These rooms are on the other side of the prison-yard, of which mention will presently be made. The sheriff and the clerk calmly carried out the formalities of the consignment to prison.

'Monsieur,' said Jacques Collin to the Governor in broken French, 'I am, as you see, a dying man. Pray, if you can, tell that examining judge as soon as possible that I crave as a favour what a criminal must most

dread, namely, to be brought before him as soon as he arrives; for my sufferings are really unbearable, and as soon as I see him the mistake will be cleared up——'

As an universal rule every criminal talks of a mistake. Go to the hulks and question the convicts; they are almost all victims of a miscarriage of justice. So this speech raises a faint smile in all who come into contact with the suspected, accused, or condemned criminal.

'I will mention your request to the examining judge,' replied the Governor.

'And I shall bless you, Monsieur!' replied the false Abbé, raising his eyes to heaven.

As soon as his name was entered on the calendar, Carlos Herrera, supported under each arm by a man of the municipal guard, and followed by a turnkey instructed by the Governor as to the number of the cell in which the prisoner was to be placed, was led through the subterranean maze of the Conciergerie into a perfectly wholesome room, whatever certain philanthropists may say to the contrary, but cut off from all possible communication with the outer world.

As soon as he was removed, the warders, the Governor, and his clerk looked at each other as though asking each other's opinion, and suspicion was legible on every face; but at the appearance of the second man in custody the spectators relapsed into their usual doubting frame of mind, concealed under an air of indifference. Only in very extraordinary cases do the functionaries of the Conciergerie feel any curiosity; the prisoners are no more to them than a barber's customers are to him. Hence all the formalities which appal the imagination are carried out with less fuss than a money transaction at a banker's, and often with greater civility.

Lucien's expression was that of a dejected criminal. He submitted to everything, and obeyed like a machine. All the way from Fontainebleau the poet had been

facing his ruin, and telling himself that the hour of expiation had tolled. Pale and exhausted, knowing nothing of what had happened at Esther's house during his absence, he only knew that he was the intimate ally of an escaped convict, a situation which enabled him to guess at disaster worse than death. When his mind could command a thought, it was that of suicide. He must, at any cost, escape the ignominy that loomed before him like the phantasm of a dreadful dream.

Jacques Collin, as the more dangerous of the two culprits, was placed in a cell of solid masonry, deriving its light from one of the narrow yards, of which there are several in the interior of the Palace, in the wing where the public prosecutor's chambers are. This little yard is the airing-ground for the female prisoners. Lucien was taken to the same part of the building, to a cell adjoining the rooms let to misdemeanants; for, by orders from the examining judge, the Governor treated him with some consideration.

Persons who have never had anything to do with the action of the law usually have the darkest notions as to the meaning of solitary or secret confinement. Ideas as to the treatment of criminals have not yet become disentangled from the old pictures of torture chambers, of the unhealthiness of a prison, the chill of stone walls sweating tears, the coarseness of the gaolers and of the food—inevitable accessories of the drama; but it is not unnecessary to explain here that these exaggerations exist only on the stage, and only make lawyers and judges smile, as well as those who visit prisons out of curiosity, or who come to study them.

For a long time, no doubt, they were terrible. In the days of the old *Parlement*, of Louis XIII. and Louis XIV., the accused were, no doubt, flung pellmell into a low room underneath the old gateway. The prisons were among the crimes of 1789, and it is enough only to see the cells where the Queen and Madame Elizabeth

were incarcerated to conceive a horror of old judicial proceedings.

In our day, though philanthropy has brought incalculable mischief on society, it has produced some good for the individual. It is to Napoleon that we owe our Criminal Code ; and this, even more than the Civil Code —which still urgently needs reform on some points—will remain one of the greatest monuments of his short reign. This new view of criminal law put an end to a perfect abyss of misery. Indeed, it may be said that, apart from the terrible moral torture which men of the better classes must suffer when they find themselves in the power of the law, the action of that power is simple and mild to a degree that would hardly be expected. Suspected or accused criminals are certainly not lodged as if they were at home ; but every necessary is supplied to them in the prisons of Paris. Besides, the burthen of feelings that weighs on them deprives the details of daily life of their customary value. It is never the body that suffers. The mind is in such a phase of violence that every form of discomfort or of brutal treatment, if such there were, would be easily endured in such a frame of mind. And it must be admitted that an innocent man is quickly released, especially in Paris.

So Lucien, on entering his cell, saw an exact reproduction of the first room he had occupied in Paris at the Hôtel Cluny. A bed to compare with those in the worst furnished apartments of the Quartier Latin, straw chairs with the bottoms out, a table and a few utensils, compose the furniture of such a room, in which two accused prisoners are not unfrequently placed together when they are quiet in their ways, and their misdeeds are not crimes of violence, but such as forgery or bankruptcy.

This resemblance between his starting-point, in the days of his innocency, and his goal, the lowest depths of degradation and shame, was so direct an appeal to his last

chord of poetic feeling, that the unhappy fellow melted into tears. For four hours he wept, as rigid in appearance as a figure of stone, but enduring the subversion of all his hopes, the crushing of all his social vanity, and the utter overthrow of his pride; smarting in each separate *I* that exists in an ambitious man—a lover, a success, a dandy, a Parisian, a poet, a libertine, and a favourite. Everything in him was broken by this fall as of Icarus.

Carlos Herrera, on the other hand, as soon as he was locked into his cell and found himself alone, began pacing it to and fro like the polar bear in his cage. He carefully examined the door and assured himself that, with the exception of the peephole, there was not a crack in it. He sounded all the walls, he looked up the funnel down which a dim light came, and he said to himself, 'I am safe enough!'

He sat down in a corner where the eye of a prying warder at the grating of the peephole could not see him. Then he took off his wig, and hastily ungummed a piece of paper that did duty as lining. The side of the paper next his head was so greasy that it looked like the very texture of the wig. If it had occurred to Bibi-Lupin to snatch off the wig to establish the identity of the Spaniard with Jacques Collin, he would never have thought twice about that paper, it looked so exactly like part of the wigmaker's work. The other side was still fairly white, and clean enough to have a few lines written on it. The delicate and tiresome task of unsticking it had been begun in La Force; two hours would not have been long enough; it had taken him half of the day before. The prisoner began by tearing this precious scrap of paper so as to have a strip four or five lines wide, which he divided into several bits; he then replaced his store of paper in the same strange hiding-place, after damping the gummed side so as to make it stick again. He felt in a lock of his hair for one of those pencil leads as thin

as a stout pin, then recently invented by Susse, and which he had put in with some gum; he broke off a scrap long enough to write with and small enough to hide in his ear. Having made these preparations with the rapidity and certainty of hand peculiar to old convicts, who are as light-fingered as monkeys, Jacques Collin sat down on the edge of his bed to meditate on his instructions to Asie, in perfect confidence that he should come across her, so entirely did he rely on the woman's genius.

'During the preliminary examination,' he reflected, 'I pretended to be a Spaniard and spoke broken French, appealed to my Ambassador, and alleged diplomatic privilege, not understanding anything I was asked, the whole performance varied by fainting, pauses, sighs—in short, all the vagaries of a dying man. I must stick to that. My papers are all regular. Asie and I can eat up Monsieur Camusot; he is no great shakes!

'Now I must think of Lucien; he must be made to pull himself together. I must get at the boy at whatever cost, and show him some plan of conduct, otherwise he will give himself up, give me up, lose all! He must be taught his lesson before he is examined. And besides, I must find some witnesses to swear to my being a priest!'

Such was the position, moral and physical, of these two prisoners, whose fate at the moment depended on Monsieur Camusot, examining judge to the Inferior Court of the Seine, and sovereign master, during the time granted to him by the Code, of the smallest details of their existence, since he alone could grant leave for them to be visited by the chaplains, the doctor, or any one else in the world.

No human authority—neither the King, nor the Keeper of the Seals, nor the Prime Minister, can encroach on the power of an examining judge; nothing can stop him, no one can control him. He is a monarch,

subject only to his conscience and the Law. At the present time, when philosophers, philanthropists, and politicians are constantly endeavouring to reduce every social power, the rights conferred on the examining judges have become the object of attacks that are all the more serious because they are almost justified by those rights, which, it must be owned, are enormous. And yet, as every man of sense will own, that power ought to remain unimpaired; in certain cases, its exercise can be mitigated by a strong infusion of caution; but society is already threatened by the ineptitude and weakness of the jury—which is, in fact, the really supreme bench, and which ought to be composed only of choice and elected men—and it would be in danger of ruin if this pillar were broken which now upholds our criminal procedure.

Arrest on suspicion is one of the terrible but necessary powers of which the risk to society is counterbalanced by its immense importance. And besides, distrust of the magistracy in general is a beginning of social dissolution. Destroy that institution, and reconstruct it on another basis; insist—as was the case before the Revolution—that judges should show a large guarantee of fortune; but, at any cost, believe in it! Do not make it an image of society to be insulted!

In these days a judge, paid as a functionary, and generally a poor man, has in the place of his dignity of old a haughtiness of demeanour that seems odious to the men raised to be his equals; for haughtiness is dignity without a solid basis. That is the vicious element in the present system. If France were divided into ten circuits, the magistracy might be reinstated by conferring its dignities on men of fortune; but with six-and-twenty circuits this is impossible.

The only real improvement to be insisted on in the exercise of the power intrusted to the examining judge, is an alteration in the conditions of preliminary imprison-

ment. The mere fact of suspicion ought to make no difference in the habits of life of the suspected parties. Houses of detention for them ought to be constructed in Paris, furnished and arranged in such a way as greatly to modify the feeling of the public with regard to suspected persons. The law is good, and is necessary; its application is in fault, and public feeling judges the laws from the way in which they are carried out. And public opinion in France condemns persons under suspicion, while, by an inexplicable reaction, it justifies those committed for trial. This, perhaps, is a result of the essentially refractory nature of the French.

This illogical temper of the Parisian people was one of the factors which contributed to the climax of this drama; nay, as will be seen, it was one of the most important.

To enter into the secret of the terrible scenes which are acted out in the examining judge's chambers; to understand the respective positions of the two belligerent powers, the Law and the examinee, the object of whose contest is a certain secret kept by the prisoner from the inquisition of the magistrate—well named in prison slang, 'the curious man'—it must always be remembered that persons imprisoned under suspicion know nothing of what is being said by the seven or eight publics that compose *the Public*, nothing of how much the police know, or the authorities, or the little that newspapers can publish as to the circumstances of the crime.

Thus, to give a man in custody such information as Jacques Collin had just received from Asie as to Lucien's arrest, is throwing a rope to a drowning man. As will be seen, in consequence of this ignorance, a stratagem which, without this warning, must certainly have been equally fatal to the convict, was doomed to failure.

Monsieur Camusot, the son-in-law of one of the clerks of the Cabinet, too well known for any account of his position and connection to be necessary here, was at this

moment almost as much perplexed as Carlos Herrera in view of the examination he was to conduct. He had formerly been President of a Court of the Paris circuit; he had been raised from that position and called to be a judge in Paris—one of the most coveted posts in the magistracy—by the influence of the celebrated Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, whose husband, attached to the Dauphin's person, and Colonel of a cavalry regiment of the Guards, was as much in favour with the King as she was with MADAME. In return for a very small service which he had done the Duchess—an important matter to her—on the occasion of a charge of forgery brought against the young Comte d'Esgrignon by a banker of Alençon (see *Le Cabinet des Antiques; Scènes de la vie de Province*), he was promoted from being a provincial judge to be president of his Court, and from being president to be an examining judge in Paris.

For eighteen months now he had sat on the most important Bench in the kingdom; and had once, at the desire of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, had an opportunity of forwarding the ends of a lady not less influential than the Duchess, namely, the Marquise d'Espard, but he had failed. (See the *Commission in Lunacy*.)

Lucien, as was told at the beginning of this *Scene*, to be revenged on Madame d'Espard, who aimed at depriving her husband of his liberty of action, was able to put the true facts before the Public Prosecutor and the Comte de Sérizy. These two important authorities being thus won over to the Marquis d'Espard's party, his wife had barely escaped the censure of the Bench by her husband's generous intervention.

On hearing, yesterday, of Lucien's arrest, the Marquise d'Espard had sent her brother-in-law, the Chevalier d'Espard, to see Madame Camusot. Madame Camusot had set off forthwith to call on the notorious Marquise. Just before dinner, on her return home, she had called her husband aside in the bedroom—

'If you can commit that little fop Lucien de Rubempré for trial, and secure his condemnation,' said she in his ear, 'you will be Councillor to the Supreme Court——'

'How?'

'Madame d'Espard longs to see that poor young man guillotined. I shivered as I heard what a pretty woman's hatred can be!'

'Do not meddle in questions of law,' said Camusot.

'I! meddle!' said she. 'If a third person could have heard us, he could not have guessed what we were talking about. The Marquise and I were as exquisitely hypocritical to each other as you are to me at this moment. She began by thanking me for your good offices in her suit, saying that she was grateful in spite of its having failed. She spoke of the terrible functions devolved on you by the law, "It is fearful to have to send a man to the scaffold—but as to that man, it would be no more than justice," and so forth. Then she lamented that such a handsome young fellow, brought to Paris by her cousin, Madame du Châtelet, should have turned out so badly. "That," said she, "is what bad women like Coralie and Esther bring young men to when they are corrupt enough to share their disgraceful profits!" Next came some fine speeches about charity and religion! Madame du Châtelet had said that Lucien deserved a thousand deaths for having half killed his mother and his sister.

'Then she spoke of a vacancy in the Supreme Court—she knows the Keeper of the Seals. "Your husband, Madame, has a fine opportunity of distinguishing himself," she said in conclusion—and that is all.'

'We distinguish ourselves every day when we do our duty,' said Camusot.

'You will go far if you are always the lawyer even to your wife,' cried Madame Camusot. 'Well, I used to think you a goose. Now I admire you.'

The lawyer's lips wore one of those smiles which

are as peculiar to them as dancers' smiles are to dancers.

'Madame, can I come in ?' said the maid.

'What is it ?' said her mistress.

'Madame, the head lady's-maid came from the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse while you were out, and she will be obliged if you would go at once to the Hôtel de Cadignan.'

'Keep dinner back,' said the lawyer's wife, remembering that the driver of the hackney coach that had brought her home was waiting to be paid.

She put her bonnet on again, got into the coach, and in twenty minutes was at the Hôtel de Cadignan. Madame Camusot was led up the private stairs, and sat alone for ten minutes in a boudoir adjoining the Duchess's bedroom. The Duchess presently appeared, splendidly dressed, for she was starting for Saint-Cloud in obedience to a Royal invitation.

'Between you and me, my dear, two words are enough.'

'Yes, Madame la Duchesse.'

'Lucien de Rubempré is in custody, your husband is conducting the inquiry; I will answer for the poor boy's innocence; see that he is released within twenty-four hours.—This is not all. Some one will ask to-morrow to see Lucien in private in his cell; your husband may be present if he chooses, so long as he is not discovered. I am, as you know, true to those who do me a service. The King looks for high courage in his magistrates in the difficult position in which he will presently find himself; I will bring your husband forward, and recommend him as a man devoted to the King even at the risk of his head. Our friend Camusot will be made first a councillor, and then the President of Court somewhere or other.—Good-bye.—I am under orders, you will excuse me, I know ?

'You will not only oblige the public prosecutor, who

cannot give an opinion in this affair; you will save the life of a dying woman, Madame de Sérizy. So you will not lack support.

'In short, you see, I put my trust in you, I need not say—you know——'

She laid a finger to her lips and disappeared.

'And I had not a chance of telling her that Madame d'Espard wants to see Lucien on the scaffold!' thought the judge's wife as she returned to her hackney cab.

She got home in such a state of anxiety that her husband, on seeing her, asked—

'What is the matter, Amélie?'

'We stand between two fires.'

She told her husband of her interview with the Duchess, speaking in his ear for fear the maid should be listening at the door.

'Now, which of them has most power?' she said in conclusion. 'The Marquise was very near getting you into trouble in the silly business of the commission on her husband, and we owe everything to the Duchess.

'One made vague promises, while the other one tells you you shall first be Councillor and then President.—Heaven forbid I should advise you; I will never meddle in matters of business; still, I am bound to repeat exactly what is said at Court and what goes on——'

'But, Amélie, you do not know what the Préfet of police sent me this morning, and by whom? By one of the most important agents of the superior police, the Bibi-Lupin of politics, who told me that the Government had a secret interest in this trial.—Now let us dine and go to the Variétés. We will talk all this over to-night in my private room, for I shall need your intelligence; that of a judge may not perhaps be enough——'

Nine magistrates out of ten would deny the influence of the wife over her husband in such cases; but though this may be a remarkable exception in society, it may be insisted on as true, even if improbable. The magistrate

is like the priest, especially in Paris, where the best of the profession are to be found; he rarely speaks of his business in the Courts, excepting of settled cases. Not only do magistrates' wives affect to know nothing; they have enough sense of propriety to understand that it would damage their husbands if, when they are told some secret, they allowed their knowledge to be suspected.

Nevertheless, on some great occasions, when promotion depends on the decision taken, many a wife, like Amélie, has helped the lawyer in his study of a case. And, after all, these exceptions, which, of course, are easily denied, since they remain unknown, depend entirely on the way in which the struggle between two natures has worked out in home-life. Now, Madame Camusot controlled her husband completely.

When all in the house were asleep, the lawyer and his wife sat down to the desk, where the magistrate had already laid out the documents in the case.

'Here are the notes, forwarded to me, at my request, by the Préfet of police,' said Camusot.

'*The Abbé Carlos Herrera.*

'This individual is undoubtedly the man named Jacques Collin, known as Trompe-la-Mort, who was last arrested in 1819, in the dwelling-house of a certain Madame Vauquer, who kept a common boarding-house in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, where he lived in concealment under the *alias* of Vautrin.'

A marginal note in the Préfet's handwriting ran thus: 'Orders have been sent by telegraph to Bibi-Lupin, chief of the Safety department, to return forthwith, to be confronted with the prisoner, as he is personally acquainted with Jacques Collin, whom he, in fact, arrested in 1819 with the connivance of a Mademoiselle Michonneau.'

'The boarders who then lived in the Maison Vauquer are still living, and may be called to establish his identity.

'The self-styled Carlos Herrera is Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré's intimate friend and adviser, and for three years past has furnished him with considerable sums, evidently obtained by dishonest means.

'This partnership, if the identity of the Spaniard with Jacques Collin can be proved, must involve the condemnation of Lucien de Rubempré.

'The sudden death of Peyrade, the police agent, is attributable to poison administered at the instigation of Jacques Collin, Rubempré, or their accomplices. The reason for this murder is the fact that justice had for a long time been on the traces of these clever criminals.'

And again, on the margin, the magistrate pointed to this note written by the Préfet himself:—

'This is the fact to my personal knowledge; and I also know that the Sieur Lucien de Rubempré has disgracefully tricked the Comte de Sérizy and the Public Prosecutor.'

'What do you say to this, Amélie?'

'It is frightful!' replied his wife. 'Go on.'

'The transformation of the convict Jacques Collin into a Spanish priest is the result of some crime more clever than that by which Coignard made himself Comte de Sainte-Hélène.'

'Lucien de Rubempré.

'Lucien Chardon, son of an apothecary at Angoulême—his mother a Demoiselle de Rubempré—bears the name of Rubempré in virtue of a royal patent. This was granted by the request of Madame la Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy.

'This young man came to Paris in 182 . . . without any means of subsistence, following Madame la Comtesse Sixte

du Châtelet, then Madame de Bargeton, a cousin of Madame d'Espard's.

'He was ungrateful to Madame de Bargeton, and cohabited with a girl named Coralie, an actress at the Gymnase, now dead, who left Monsieur Camusot, a silk mercer in the Rue des Bourdonnais, to live with Rubempré.

'Ere long, having sunk into poverty through the insufficiency of the money allowed him by this actress, he seriously compromised his brother-in-law, a highly-respected printer of Angoulême, by giving forged bills, for which David Séchard was arrested, during a short visit paid to Angoulême by Lucien. In consequence of this affair Rubempré fled, but suddenly reappeared in Paris with the Abbé Carlos Herrera.

'Though having no visible means of subsistence, the said Lucien de Rubempré spent on an average three hundred thousand francs during the three years of his second residence in Paris, and can only have obtained the money from the self-styled Abbé Carlos Herrera—but how did he come by it?

'He has recently laid out above a million francs in repurchasing the Rubempré estates to fulfil the conditions on which he was to be allowed to marry Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu. This marriage has been broken off in consequence of inquiries made by the Grandlieu family, the said Lucien having told them that he had obtained the money from his brother-in-law and his sister; but the information obtained, more especially by Monsieur Derville, attorney-at-law, proves that not only were that worthy couple ignorant of his having made this purchase, but that they believed the said Lucien to be deeply in debt.

'Moreover, the property inherited by the Séchards consists of houses; and the ready money, by their affidavit, amounted to about two hundred thousand francs.

'Lucien was secretly cohabiting with Esther Gobseck;

hence there can be no doubt that all the lavish gifts of the Baron de Nucingen, the girl's protector, were handed over to the said Lucien.

'Lucien and his companion, the convict, have succeeded in keeping their footing in the face of the world longer than Coignard did, deriving their income from the prostitution of the said Esther, formerly on the register of the town.'

Though these notes are to a great extent a repetition of the story already told, it was necessary to reproduce them to show the part played by the police in Paris. As has already been seen from the note on Peyrade, the police has summaries, almost invariably correct, concerning every family or individual whose life is under suspicion, or whose actions are of a doubtful character. It knows every circumstance of their delinquencies. This universal register and account of consciences is as accurately kept as the register of the Bank of France and its account of fortunes. Just as the Bank notes the slightest delay in payment, gauges every credit, takes stock of every capitalist, and watches their proceedings, so does the police weigh and measure the honesty of each citizen. With it, as in a Court of Law, innocence has nothing to fear; it has no hold on anything but crime.

However high the rank of a family, it cannot evade this social providence.

And its discretion is equal to the extent of its power. This vast mass of written evidence compiled by the police—reports, notes, and summaries—an ocean of information, sleeps undisturbed, as deep and calm as the sea. Some accident occurs, some crime or misdemeanour becomes aggressive,—then the law refers to the police, and immediately, if any documents bear on the suspected criminal, the judge is informed. These records, an analysis of his antecedents, are merely side-lights, and unknown beyond the walls of the Palais de Justice.

No legal use can be made of them; Justice is informed by them, and takes advantage of them; but that is all. These documents form, as it were, the inner lining of the tissue of crimes, their first cause, which is hardly ever made public. No jury would accept it; and the whole country would rise up in wrath if excerpts from those documents came out in the trial at the Assizes. In fact, it is the truth which is doomed to remain in the well, as it is everywhere and at all times. There is not a magistrate who, after twelve years' experience in Paris, is not fully aware that the Assize Court and the police authorities keep the secret of half these squalid atrocities, or who does not admit that half the crimes that are committed are never punished by the law.

If the public could know how reserved the employés of the police are—who do not forget—they would reverence these honest men as much as they do Cheverus. The police is supposed to be astute, Machiavellian; it is, in fact, most benign. But it hears every passion in its paroxysms, it listens to every kind of treachery, and keeps notes of all. The police is terrible on one side only. What it does for justice it does no less for political interests; but in these it is as ruthless and as one-sided as the fires of the Inquisition.

'Put this aside,' said the lawyer, replacing the notes in their cover; 'this is a secret between the police and the law. The judge will estimate its value, but Monsieur and Madame Camusot must know nothing of it.'

'As if I needed telling that!' said his wife.

'Lucien is guilty,' he went on; 'but of what?'

'A man who is the favourite of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, of the Comtesse de Sérizy, and loved by Clotilde de Grandlieu, is not guilty,' said Amélie. 'The other *must* be answerable for everything.'

'But Lucien is his accomplice,' cried Camusot.

'Take my advice,' said Amélie. 'Restore this priest

to the diplomatic career he so greatly adorns, exculpate this little wretch, and find some other criminal——'

'How you run on!' said the magistrate with a smile. 'Women go to the point, plunging through the law as birds fly through the air, and find nothing to stop them.'

'But,' said Amélie, 'whether he is a diplomate or a convict, the Abbé Carlos will find some one to get him out of the scrape.'

'I am only a considering cap; you are the brain,' said Camusot.

'Well, the sitting is closed; give your Mélie a kiss; it is one o'clock.'

And Madame Camusot went to bed, leaving her husband to arrange his papers and his ideas in preparation for the task of examining the two prisoners next morning.

And thus, while the prison vans were conveying Jacques Collin and Lucien to the Conciergerie, the examining judge, having breakfasted, was making his way across Paris on foot, after the unpretentious fashion of Parisian magistrates, to go to his chambers, where all the documents in the case were laid ready for him.

This was the way of it: Every examining judge has a head-clerk, a sort of sworn legal secretary—a race that perpetuates itself without any premiums or encouragement, producing a number of excellent souls in whom secrecy is natural and incorruptible. From the origin of the Parlement to the present day, no case has ever been known at the Palais de Justice of any gossip or indiscretion on the part of a clerk bound to the Courts of Inquiry. Gentil sold the release given by Louise de Savoie to Semblançay; a War Office clerk sold the plan of the Russian campaign to Czernitchef; and these traitors were more or less rich. The prospect of a post in the Palais and professional conscientiousness are enough to make a judge's clerk a successful rival of the tomb—for

the tomb has betrayed many secrets since chemistry has made such progress.

This official is, in fact, the magistrate's pen. It will be understood by many readers that a man may gladly be the shaft of a machine, while they wonder why he is content to remain a bolt; still the bolt is content—perhaps the machinery terrifies him.

Camusot's clerk, a young man of two-and-twenty, named Coquart, had come in the morning to fetch all the documents and the judge's notes, and laid everything ready in his chambers, while the lawyer himself was wandering along the quays, looking at the curiosities in the shops, and wondering within himself—

'How on earth am I to set to work with such a clever rascal as this Jacques Collin, supposing it is he? The head of the Safety will know him. I must look as if I knew what I was about, if only for the sake of the police! I see so many insuperable difficulties, that the best plan would be to enlighten the Marquise and the Duchess by showing them the notes of the police, and I should avenge my father, from whom Lucien stole Coralie.—If I can unveil these scoundrels, my skill will be loudly proclaimed, and Lucien will soon be thrown over by his friends.—Well, well, the examination will settle all that.'

He turned into a curiosity shop, tempted by a Boule clock.

'Not to be false to my conscience, and yet to oblige two great ladies—that will be a triumph of skill,' thought he. 'What, do you collect coins too, Monsieur?' said Camusot to the Public Prosecutor, whom he found in the shop.

'It is a taste dear to all dispensers of justice,' said the Comte de Granville, laughing. 'They look at the reverse side of every medal.'

And after looking about the shop for some minutes, as if continuing his search, he accompanied Camusot on his way down the quay without its ever occurring to

Camusot that anything but chance had brought them together.

'You are examining Monsieur de Rubempré this morning,' said the Public Prosecutor. 'Poor fellow—I liked him.'

'There are several charges against him,' said Camusot.

'Yes, I saw the police papers; but some of the information came from an agent who is independent of the Préfet, the notorious Corentin, who has caused the death of more innocent men than you will ever send guilty men to the scaffold, and—— But that rascal is out of your reach.—Without trying to influence the conscience of such a magistrate as you are, I may point out to you that if you could be perfectly sure that Lucien was ignorant of the contents of that woman's will, it would be self-evident that he had no interest in her death, for she gave him enormous sums of money.'

'We can prove his absence at the time when this Esther was poisoned,' said Camusot. 'He was at Fontainebleau, on the watch for Mademoiselle de Grandlieu and the Duchesse de Lenoncourt.'

'And he still cherished such hopes of marrying Mademoiselle de Grandlieu,' said the Public Prosecutor —'I have it from the Duchesse de Grandlieu herself—that it is inconceivable that such a clever young fellow should compromise his chances by a perfectly aimless crime.'

'Yes,' said Camusot, 'especially if Esther gave him all she got.'

'Derville and Nucingen both say that she died in ignorance of the inheritance she had long since come into,' added Granville.

'But then what do you suppose is the meaning of it all?' asked Camusot. 'For there is something at the bottom of it.'

'A crime committed by some servant,' said the Public Prosecutor.

'Unfortunately,' remarked Camusot, 'it would be quite like Jacques Collin—for the Spanish priest is certainly none other than that escaped convict—to have taken possession of the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs derived from the sale of the certificate of shares given to Esther by Nucingen.'

'Weigh everything with care, my dear Camusot. Be prudent. The Abbé Carlos Herrera has diplomatic connections; still, an envoy who had committed a crime would not be sheltered by his position. Is he or is he not the Abbé Carlos Herrera? That is the important question.'

And Monsieur de Granville bowed, and turned away, as requiring no answer.

'So he too wants to save Lucien!' thought Camusot, going on by the Quai des Lunettes, while the Public Prosecutor entered the Palais through the Cour de Harlay.

On reaching the courtyard of the Conciergerie, Camusot went to the Governor's room and led him into the middle of the pavement, where no one could overhear them.

'My dear sir, do me the favour of going to La Force, and inquiring of your colleague there whether he happens at this moment to have there any convicts who were on the hulks at Toulon between 1810 and 1815; or have you any imprisoned here? We will transfer those of La Force here for a few days, and you will let me know whether this so-called Spanish priest is known to them as Jacques Collin, otherwise Trompe-la-Mort.'

'Very good, Monsieur Camusot.—But Bibi-Lupin is come . . .'

'What, already?' said the judge.

'He was at Melun. He was told that Trompe-la-Mort had to be identified, and he smiled with joy. He awaits your orders.'

'Send him to me.'

The Governor was then able to lay before Monsieur Camusot Jacques Collin's request, and he described the man's deplorable condition.

'I intended to examine him first,' replied the magistrate, 'but not on account of his health. I received a note this morning from the Governor of La Force. Well, this rascal, who described himself to you as having been dying for twenty-four hours past, slept so soundly that they went into his cell there, with the doctor for whom the Governor had sent, without his hearing them; the doctor did not even feel his pulse, he left him to sleep—which proves that his conscience is as tough as his health. I shall accept this feigned illness only so far as it may enable me to study my man,' added Monsieur Camusot, smiling.

'We live to learn every day with these various grades of prisoners,' said the Governor of the prison.

The Préfecture of police adjoins the Conciergerie, and the magistrates, like the Governor, knowing all the subterranean passages, can get to and fro with the greatest rapidity. This explains the miraculous ease with which information can be conveyed, during the sitting of the Courts, to the officials and the presidents of the Assize Courts. And by the time Monsieur Camusot had reached the top of the stairs leading to his chambers, Bibi-Lupin was there too, having come by the Salle des Pas-Perdus.

'What zeal!' said Camusot, with a smile.

'Ah, well, you see if it is *he*,' replied the man, 'you will see great fun in the prison-yard if by chance there are any old stagers here.

'Why?'

'Trompe-la-Mort sneaked their chips, and I know that they have vowed to be the death of him.'

They were the convicts whose money, intrusted to Trompe-la-Mort, had all been made away with by him for Lucien, as has been told.

'Could you lay your hand on the witnesses of his former arrest?'

'Give me two summonses of witnesses, and I will find you some to-day.'

'Coquart,' said the lawyer, as he took off his gloves, and placed his hat and stick in a corner, 'fill up two summonses by Monsieur's directions.'

He looked at himself in the glass over the chimney shelf, where stood, in the place of a clock, a basin and jug. On one side was a bottle of water and a glass, on the other a lamp. He rang the bell; his usher came in a few minutes after.

'Is anybody here for me yet?' he asked the man, whose business it was to receive the witnesses, to verify their summons, and to set them in the order of their arrival.

'Yes, sir.'

'Take their names, and bring me the list.'

The examining judges, to save time, are often obliged to carry on several inquiries at once. Hence the long waiting inflicted on the witnesses, who have seats in the ushers' hall, where the judges' bells are constantly ringing.

'And then,' Camusot went on, 'bring up the Abbé Carlos Herrera.'

'Ah, ha! I was told that he was a priest in Spanish. Pooh! It is a new edition of Collet, Monsieur Camusot,' said the head of the Safety department.

'There is nothing new!' replied Camusot.

And he signed the two formidable documents which alarm everybody, even the most innocent witnesses, whom the law thus requires to appear, under severe penalties in case of failure.

By this time Jacques Collin had, about half an hour since, finished his deep meditations, and was armed for the fray. Nothing is more perfectly characteristic of

this type of the mob in rebellion against the law than the few words he had written on the greasy scraps of paper.

The sense of the first—for it was written in the language, the very slang of slang, agreed upon by Asie and himself, a cypher of words—was as follows :—

'Go to the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse or Madame de Sérizy : one of them must see Lucien before he is examined, and give him the enclosed paper to read. Then find Europe and Paccard ; those two thieves must be at my orders, and ready to play any part I may set them.

'Go to Rastignac ; tell him, from the man he met at the opera-ball, to come and swear that the Abbé Carlos Herrera has no resemblance to Jacques Collin who was apprehended at Vauquer's. Do the same with Dr. Bianchon, and get Lucien's two women to work to the same end.'

On the enclosed fragment were these words in good French :—

'Lucien, confess nothing about me. I am the Abbé Carlos Herrera. Not only will this be your exculpation ; but, if you do not lose your head, you will have seven millions and your honour cleared.'

These two bits of paper, gummed on the side of the writing so as to look like one piece, were then rolled tightly, with a dexterity peculiar to men who have dreamed of getting free from the hulks. The whole thing assumed the shape and consistency of a ball of dirty rubbish, about as big as the sealing-wax heads which thrifty women stick on the head of a large needle when the eye is broken.

'If I am examined first, we are saved ; if it is the boy, all is lost,' said he to himself, while he waited.

His plight was so sore that the strong man's face was wet with white sweat. Indeed, this wonderful man saw as clearly in his sphere of crime as Molière did in

his sphere of dramatic poetry, or Cuvier in that of extinct organisms. Genius of whatever kind is intuition. Below this highest manifestation other remarkable achievements may be due to talent. This is what divides men of the first rank from those of the second.

Crime has its men of genius. Jacques Collin, driven to bay, had hit on the same notion as Madame Camusot's ambition and Madame de Sérizy's passion, suddenly revived by the shock of the dreadful disaster which was overwhelming Lucien. This was the supreme effort of human intellect directed against the steel armour of Justice.

On hearing the rasping of the heavy locks and bolts of his door, Jacques Collin resumed his mask of a dying man; he was helped in this by the intoxicating joy that he felt at the sound of the warder's shoes in the passage. He had no idea how Asie would get near him; but he relied on meeting her on the way, especially after her promise given in the Saint-Jean gateway.

After that fortunate achievement she had gone on to the Place de Grève.

Till 1830 the name of La Grève (the Strand) had a meaning that is now lost. Every part of the river-shore from the Pont d'Arcole to the Pont Louis-Philippe was then as nature had made it, excepting the paved way which was at the top of the bank. When the river was in flood a boat could pass close under the houses and at the end of the streets running down to the river. On the quay the footpath was for the most part raised with a few steps; and when the river was up to the houses, vehicles had to pass along the horrible Rue de la Mortellerie, which has now been completely removed to make room for enlarging the Hôtel de Ville.

So the sham costermonger could easily and quickly run her truck down to the bottom of the quay, and hide it there till the real owner—who was, in fact, drinking the price of her wares, sold bodily to Asie, in one of

the abominable taverns in the Rue de la Mortellerie—should return to claim it. At that time the Quai Pelletier was being extended, the entrance to the works was guarded by a crippled soldier, and the barrow would be quite safe in his keeping.

Asie then jumped into a hackney cab on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, and said to the driver, 'To the Temple, and look sharp, I'll tip you well.'

A woman dressed like Asie could disappear, without any questions being asked, in the huge market-place, where all the rags in Paris are gathered together, where a thousand costermongers wander round, and two hundred old-clothes sellers are chaffering.

The two prisoners had hardly been locked up when she was dressing herself in a low, damp entresol over one of those foul shops where remnants are sold, pieces stolen by tailors and dressmakers—an establishment kept by an old maid known as La Romette, from her Christian name Jerômette. La Romette was to the 'purchasers of wardrobes' what these women are to the better class of so-called ladies in difficulties—Madame la Ressource, that is to say, money-lenders at a hundred per cent.

'Now, child,' said Asie, 'I have got to be figged out. I must be a Baroness of the Faubourg Saint-Germain at the very least. And sharp's the word, for my feet are in hot oil. You know what gowns suit me. Hand up the rouge-pot, find me some first-class bits of lace, and the swaggerest jewellery you can pick out.—Send the girl to call a coach, and have it brought to the back door.'

'Yes, Madame,' the woman replied very humbly, and with the eagerness of a maid waiting on her mistress.

If there had been any one to witness the scene, he would have understood that the woman known as Asie was at home here.

'I have had some diamonds offered me,' said la Romette, as she dressed Asie's head.

'Stolen?'

'I should think so.'

'Well, then, however cheap they may be, we must do without 'em. We must fight shy of the beak for a long time to come.'

It will now be understood how Asie contrived to be in the Salle des Pas-Perdus of the Palais de Justice with a summons in her hand, asking her way along the passages and stairs leading to the examining judge's chambers, and inquiring for Monsieur Camusot, about a quarter of an hour before that gentleman's arrival.

Asie was not recognisable. After washing off her 'make-up' as an old woman, like an actress, she applied rouge and pearl powder, and covered her head with a well-made fair wig. Dressed exactly as a lady of the Faubourg Saint-Germain might be if in search of a dog she had lost, she looked about forty, for she shrouded her features under a splendid black lace veil. A pair of stays, severely laced, disguised her cook's figure. With very good gloves and a rather large bustle, she exhaled the perfumes of powder *à la Maréchale*. Playing with a bag mounted in gold, she divided her attention between the walls of the building, where she found herself evidently for the first time, and the string by which she led a dainty little spaniel. Such a dowager could not fail to attract the notice of the black-robed natives of the Salle des Pas-Perdus.

Besides the briefless lawyers who sweep this hall with their gowns, and who speak of the leading advocates by their Christian names, as fine gentlemen address each other, to produce the impression that they are of the aristocracy of the law, patient youths are often to be seen, hangers-on of the attorneys, waiting, waiting, in hope of a case put down for the end of the day, which they may be so lucky as to be called to plead if the

advocates retained for the earlier cases should not come out in time.

A very curious study would be that of the differences between these various black gowns, pacing the immense hall in threes, or sometimes in fours, their persistent talk filling the place with a loud, echoing hum—a hall well named indeed, for this slow walk exhausts the lawyers as much as the waste of words. But such a study has its place in the volumes destined to reveal the life of Paris pleaders.

Asie had counted on the presence of these youths; she laughed in her sleeve at some of the pleasantries she overheard, and finally succeeded in attracting the attention of Massol, a young lawyer whose time was more taken up by the *Police Gazette* than by clients, and who came up with a laugh to place himself at the service of a woman so elegantly scented and so handsomely dressed.

Asie put on a little, thin voice to explain to this obliging gentleman that she appeared in answer to a summons from a judge named Camusot.

'Oh! in the Rubempré case?'

So the affair had its name already.

'Oh, it is not my affair. It is my maid's, a girl named Europe, who was with me twenty-four hours, and who fled when she saw my servant bring in a piece of stamped paper.'

Then, like any old woman who spends her life gossiping in the chimney-corner, prompted by Massol, she poured out the story of her woes with her first husband, one of the three Directors of the land revenue. She consulted the young lawyer as to whether she would do well to enter on a lawsuit with her son-in-law, the Comte de Gross-Narp, who made her daughter very miserable, and whether the law allowed her to dispose of her fortune.

In spite of all his efforts, Massol could not be sure whether the summons were addressed to the mistress or

the maid. At the first moment he had only glanced at this legal document of most familiar aspect ; for, to save time, it is printed, and the magistrates' clerks have only to fill in the blanks left for the names and addresses of the witnesses, the hour for which they are called, and so forth.

Asie made him tell her all about the Palais, which she knew more intimately than the lawyer did. Finally, she inquired at what hour Monsieur Camusot would arrive.

'Well, the examining judges generally are here by about ten o'clock.'

'It is now a quarter to ten,' said she, looking at a pretty little watch, a perfect gem of goldsmith's work, which made Massol say to himself—

'Where the devil will Fortune make herself at home next !'

At this moment Asie had come to the dark hall looking out on the yard of the Conciergerie, where the ushers wait. On seeing the gate through the window, she exclaimed—

'What are those high walls ?'

'That is the Conciergerie.'

'Oh ! so that is the Conciergerie where our poor queen—— Oh ! I should so like to see her cell !'

'Impossible, Madame la Baronne,' replied the young lawyer, on whose arm the dowager was now leaning. 'A permit is indispensable, and very difficult to procure.'

'I have been told,' she went on, 'that Louis XVIII. himself composed the inscription that is to be seen in Marie-Antoinette's cell.'

'Yes, Madame la Baronne.'

'How much I should like to know Latin that I might study the words of that inscription !' said she. 'Do you think that Monsieur Camusot could give me a permit ?'

'That is not in his power ; but he could take you there.'

'But his business——' objected she.

'Oh!' said Massol, 'prisoners under suspicion can wait.'

'To be sure,' said she artlessly, 'they are under suspicion.—But I know Monsieur de Granville, your public prosecutor——'

This hint had a magical effect on the ushers and the young lawyer.

'Ah, you know Monsieur de Granville?' said Massol, who was inclined to ask the client thus sent him by chance her name and address.

'I often see him at my friend Monsieur de Sérizy's house. Madame de Sérizy is a connection of mine through the Ronquerolles.'

'Well, if Madame wishes to go down to the Conciergerie,' said an usher, 'she——'

'Yes,' said Massol.

So the Baroness and the lawyer were allowed to pass, and they presently found themselves in the little guard-room at the top of the stairs leading to the 'mousetrap,' a spot well known to Asie, forming, as has been said, a post of observation between those cells and the Court of the Sixth Chamber, through which everybody is obliged to pass.

'Will you ask if Monsieur Camusot is come yet?' said she, seeing some gendarmes playing cards.

'Yes, Madame, he has just come up from the "mousetrap."'

'The mousetrap!' said she. 'What is that?—Oh! how stupid of me not to have gone straight to the Comte de Granville.—But I have not time now. Pray take me to speak to Monsieur Camusot before he is otherwise engaged.'

'Oh, you have plenty of time for seeing Monsieur Camusot,' said Massol. 'If you send him in your card, he will spare you the discomfort of waiting in the ante-room with the witnesses.—We can be civil here to ladies like you.—You have a card about you?'

At this instant Asie and her lawyer were exactly in front of the window of the guardroom whence the gendarmes could observe the gate of the Conciergerie. The gendarmes, brought up to respect the defenders of the widow and the orphan, were aware too of the prerogative of the gown, and for a few minutes allowed the Baroness to remain there escorted by a pleader. Asie listened to the terrible tales which a young lawyer is ready to tell about that prison-gate. She would not believe that those who were condemned to death were prepared for the scaffold behind those bars; but the sergeant-at-arms assured her it was so.

'How much I should like to see it done!' cried she.

And there she remained, prattling to the lawyer and the sergeant, till she saw Jacques Collin come out supported by two gendarmes, and preceded by Monsieur Camusot's clerk.

'Ah, there is a chaplain no doubt going to prepare a poor wretch——'

'Not at all, Madame la Baronne,' said the gendarme. 'He is a prisoner coming to be examined.'

'What is he accused of?'

'He is concerned in this poisoning case.'

'Oh! I should like to see him.'

'You cannot stay here,' said the sergeant, 'for he is under close arrest, and he must pass through here. You see, Madame, that door leads to the stairs——'

'Oh! thank you!' cried the Baroness, making for the door, to rush down the stairs, where she at once shrieked out, 'Oh! where am I?'

This cry reached the ear of Jacques Collin, who was thus prepared to see her. The sergeant flew after Madame la Baronne, seized her by the middle, and lifted her back like a feather into the midst of a group of five gendarmes, who started up as one man; for in that guardroom everything is regarded as suspicious. The proceeding was arbitrary, but the arbitrariness was

necessary. The young lawyer himself had cried out twice, 'Madame! Madame!' in his horror, so much did he fear finding himself in the wrong.

The Abbé Carlos Herrera, half fainting, sank on a chair in the guardroom.

'Poor man!' said the Baroness. 'Can he be a criminal?'

The words, though spoken low to the young advocate, could be heard by all, for the silence of death reigned in that terrible guardroom. Certain privileged persons are sometimes allowed to see famous criminals on their way through this room or through the passages, so that the clerk and the gendarmes who had charge of the Abbé Carlos made no remark. Also, in consequence of the devoted zeal of the sergeant who had snatched up the Baroness to hinder any communication between the prisoner and the visitors, there was a considerable space between them.

'Let us go on,' said Jacques Collin, making an effort to rise.

At the same moment the little ball rolled out of his sleeve, and the spot where it fell was noted by the Baroness, who could look about her freely from under her veil. The little pellet, being damp and sticky, did not roll; for such trivial details, apparently unimportant, had all been duly considered by Jacques Collin to ensure success.

When the prisoner had been led up the higher part of the steps, Asie very unaffectedly dropped her bag and picked it up again; but in stooping she seized the pellet which had escaped notice, its colour being exactly like that of the dust and mud on the floor.

'Oh dear!' cried she, 'it goes to my heart!—He is dying——'

'Or seems to be,' replied the sergeant.

'Monsieur,' said Asie to the lawyer, 'take me at once to Monsieur Camusot; I have come about this case;

and he might be very glad to see me before examining that poor priest.'

The lawyer and the Baroness left the guardroom, with its greasy, fuliginous walls; but as soon as they reached the top of the stairs, Asie exclaimed—

'Oh, and my dog! My poor little dog!' and she rushed off like a mad creature down the Salle des Pas-Perdus, asking every one where her dog was. She got to the corridor beyond (la Gallerie Marchande, or Merchants' Hall, as it is called), and flew to the staircase, saying, 'There he is!'

These stairs lead to the Cour de Harlay, through which Asie, having played out the farce, passed out and took a hackney cab on the Quai des Orfèvres, where there is a stand; thus she vanished with the summons requiring 'Europe' to appear, her real name being unknown to the police and the lawyers.

'Rue Neuve-Saint-Marc,' cried she to the driver.

Asie could depend on the absolute secrecy of an old-clothes purchaser, known as Madame Nourrisson, who also called herself Madame de Saint-Estève; and who would lend Asie not merely her personality, but her shop at need, for it was there that Nucingen had bargained for the surrender of Esther. Asie was quite at home there, for she had a bedroom in Madame Nourrisson's establishment.

She paid the driver, and went up to her room, nodding to Madame Nourrisson in a way to make her understand that she had not time to say two words to her.

As soon as she was safe from observation, Asie unwrapped the papers with the care of a savant unrolling a palimpsest. After reading the instructions, she thought it wise to copy the lines intended for Lucien on a sheet of letter-paper; then she went down to Madame Nourrisson, to whom she talked while a little shop-girl went to fetch a cab from the Boulevard des Italiens.

She thus extracted the addresses of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and of Madame de Sérizy, which were known to Madame Nourrisson by her dealings with their maids.

All this running about and elaborate business took up more than two hours. Madame la Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, who lived at the top of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, kept Madame de Saint-Estève waiting an hour, although the lady's-maid, after knocking at the boudoir door, had handed in to her mistress a card with Madame de Saint-Estève's name, on which Asie had written, 'Called about pressing business concerning Lucien.'

Her first glance at the Duchess's face showed her how ill-timed her visit must be; she apologised for disturbing Madame la Duchesse when she was resting, on the plea of the danger in which Lucien stood.

'Who are you?' asked the Duchess, without any pretence at politeness, as she looked at Asie from head to foot; for Asie, though she might be taken for a Baroness by Maître Massol in the Salle des Pas-Perdus, when she stood on the carpet in the boudoir of the Hôtel de Cadignan, looked like a splash of mud on a white satin gown.

'I am a dealer in cast-off clothes, Madame la Duchesse; for in such matters every lady applies to women whose business rests on a basis of perfect secrecy. I have never betrayed anybody, though God knows how many great ladies have intrusted their diamonds to me by the month while wearing false jewels made to imitate them exactly.'

'You have some other name?' said the Duchess, smiling at a reminiscence recalled to her by this reply.

'Yes, Madame la Duchesse, I am Madame de Saint-Estève on great occasions, but in the trade I am Madame Nourrisson.'

'Well, well,' said the Duchess in an altered tone.

'I am able to be of great service,' Asie went on, 'for we hear the husbands' secrets as well as the wives'. I

have done many little jobs for Monsieur de Marsay, whom Madame la Duchesse——'

'That will do, that will do!' cried the Duchess. 'What about Lucien?'

'If you wish to save him, Madame, you must have courage enough to lose no time in dressing. But, indeed, Madame la Duchesse, you could not look more charming than you do at this moment. You are sweet enough to charm anybody, take an old woman's word for it! In short, Madame, do not wait for your carriage, but get into my hackney coach. Come to Madame de Sérizy's if you hope to avert worse misfortunes than the death of that cherub——'

'Go on, I will follow you,' said the Duchess after a moment's hesitation. 'Between us we may give Léontine some courage . . .'

Notwithstanding the really demoniacal activity of this Dorine of the hulks, the clock was striking two when she and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse went into the Comtesse de Sérizy's house in the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin. Once there, thanks to the Duchess, not an instant was lost. The two women were at once shown up to the Countess, whom they found reclining on a couch in a miniature chalet, surrounded by a garden fragrant with the rarest flowers.

'That is well,' said Asie, looking about her. 'No one can overhear us.'

'Oh! my dear, I am half dead! Tell me, Diane, what have you done?' cried the Countess, starting up like a fawn, and, seizing the Duchess by the shoulders, she melted into tears.

'Come, come, Léontine; there are occasions when women like us must not cry, but act,' said the Duchess, forcing the Countess to sit down on the sofa by her side.

Asie studied the Countess's face with the scrutiny peculiar to those old hands, which pierces to the soul of a woman as certainly as a surgeon's instrument probes a

wound! Jacques Collin's ally at once discerned the stamp of one of the rarest feelings in a woman of the world: real sorrow!—the sorrow that graves ineradicable lines on the heart and on the features. She was dressed without the least touch of vanity. She was now forty-five, and her printed muslin wrapper, tumbled and untidy, showed her bosom without any art or even stays! Her eyes were set in dark circles, and her mottled cheeks showed the traces of bitter tears. She wore no sash round her waist; the embroidery on her petticoat and shift were all crumpled. Her hair, knotted up under a lace cap, had not been combed for four-and-twenty hours, and showed as a thin, short plait and ragged little curls. Léontine had forgotten to put on her false hair.

'You are in love for the first time in your life?' said Asie sententiously.

Léontine then saw the woman, and started with horror.

'Who is that, my dear Diane?' she asked of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse.

'Whom should I bring with me but a woman who is devoted to Lucien and willing to help us?'

Asie had hit the truth. Madame de Sérizy, who was regarded as one of the most fickle of fashionable women, had had an attachment of ten years' standing for the Marquis d'Aiglemont. Since the Marquis's departure for the colonies, she had gone wild about Lucien, and had won him from the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, knowing nothing—like the Paris world generally—of Lucien's passion for Esther. In the world of fashion a recognised attachment does more to ruin a woman's reputation than ten unconfessed *liaisons*; how much more then two such attachments. However, as no one thought of Madame de Sérizy as a responsible person, the historian cannot undertake to speak for her virtue thus doubly dog's-eared.

She was fair, of medium height, and well preserved, as a fair woman can be who is well preserved at all; that is

to say, she did not look more than thirty, being slender, but not lean, with a white skin and flaxen hair; she had hands, feet, and a shape of aristocratic elegance, and was as witty as all the Ronquerolles, spiteful, therefore, to women, and good-natured to men. Her large fortune, her husband's fine position, and that of her brother, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, had protected her from the mortifications with which any other woman would have been overwhelmed. She had this great merit—that she was honest in her depravity, and confessed her worship of the manners and customs of the Regency.

Now, at forty-two, this woman—who had hitherto regarded men as no more than pleasing playthings, to whom, indeed, she had, strange to say, granted much, regarding love as merely a matter of sacrifice to gain the upper hand,—this woman, on first seeing Lucien, had been seized with such a passion as the Baron de Nucingen's for Esther. She had loved, as Asie had just told her, for the first time in her life.

This postponement of youth is more common with Parisian women than might be supposed, and causes the ruin of some virtuous souls just as they are reaching the haven of forty. The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse was the only person in the secret of the vehement and absorbing passion, of which the joys, from the girlish suspicion of first love to the preposterous follies of fulfilment, had made Léontine half crazy and insatiable.

True love, as we know, is merciless. The discovery of Esther's existence had been followed by one of those outbursts of rage which in a woman rise even to the pitch of murder; then came the phase of meanness, to which a sincere affection humbles itself so gladly. Indeed, for the last month the Countess would have given ten years of her life to have Lucien again for one week. At last she had even resigned herself to accept Esther as her rival, just when the news of her lover's

arrest had come like the last trump on this paroxysm of devotion.

The Countess had nearly died of it. Her husband had himself nursed her in bed, fearing the betrayal of delirium, and for twenty-four hours she had been living with a knife in her heart. She said to her husband in her fever—

'Save Lucien, and I will live henceforth for you alone.'

'Indeed, as Madame la Duchesse tells you, it is of no use to make your eyes like boiled gooseberries,' cried the dreadful Asie, shaking the Countess by the arm. 'If you want to save him, there is not a minute to lose. He is innocent—I swear it by my mother's bones!'

'Yes, yes, of course he is!' cried the Countess, looking quite kindly at the dreadful old woman.

'But,' Asie went on, 'if Monsieur Camusot questions him the wrong way, he can make a guilty man of him with two sentences; so, if it is in your power to get the Conciergerie opened to you, and to say a few words to him, go at once, and give him this paper.—He will be released to-morrow; I will answer for it. Now, get him out of the scrape, for you got him into it.'

'I?'

'Yes, you!—You fine ladies never have a sou even when you own millions. When I allowed myself the luxury of keeping boys, they always had their pockets full of gold! Their amusements amused me. It is delightful to be mother and mistress in one. Now, you—you let the men you love die of hunger without asking any questions. Esther, now, made no speeches; she gave, at the cost of perdition, soul and body, the million your Lucien was required to show, and that is what has brought him to this pass——'

'Poor girl! Did she do that? I love her!' said Léontine.

'Yes—now!' said Asie, with freezing irony.

'She was a real beauty; but now, my angel, you are better looking than she is.—And Lucien's marriage is so effectually broken off, that nothing can mend it,' said the Duchess in a whisper to Léontine.

The effect of this revelation and forecast was so great on the Countess that she was well again. She passed her hand over her brow; she was young once more.

'Now, my lady, hot foot, and make haste!' said Asie, seeing the change, and guessing what had caused it.

'But,' said Madame de Maufrigneuse, 'if the first thing is to prevent Lucien's being examined by Monsieur Camusot, we can do that by writing two words to the judge and sending your man with it to the Palais, Léontine.'

'Then come into my room,' said Madame de Sérizy.

This is what was taking place at the Palais while Lucien's protectresses were obeying the orders issued by Jacques Collin. The gendarmes placed the moribund prisoner on a chair facing the window in Monsieur Camusot's room; he was sitting in his place in front of his table. Coquart, pen in hand, had a little table to himself a few yards off.

The aspect of a magistrate's chambers is not a matter of indifference; and if this room had not been chosen intentionally, it must be owned that chance had favoured justice. An examining judge, like a painter, requires the clear equable light of a north window, for the criminal's face is a picture which he must constantly study. Hence most magistrates place their table, as this of Camusot's was arranged, so as to sit with their back to the window and leave the face of the examinee in broad daylight. Not one of them all but, by the end of six months, has assumed an absent-minded and indifferent expression, if he does not wear spectacles, and maintains it throughout the examination.

It was a sudden change of expression in the prisoner's

face, detected by these means, and caused by a sudden point-blank question, that led to the discovery of the crime committed by Castaing at the very moment when, after a long consultation with the public prosecutor, the magistrate was about to let the criminal loose on society for lack of evidence. This detail will show the least intelligent person how living, interesting, curious, and dramatically terrible is the conflict of an examination—a conflict without witnesses, but always recorded. God knows what remains on the paper of the scenes at white heat in which a look, a tone, a quiver of the features, the faintest touch of colour lent by some emotion, has been fraught with danger, as though the adversaries were savages watching each other to plant a fatal stroke. A report is no more than the ashes of the fire.

'What is your real name?' Camusot asked Jacques Collin.

'Don Carlos Herrera, canon of the Royal Chapter of Toledo, and secret envoy of His Majesty Ferdinand VII.'

It must here be observed that Jacques Collin spoke French like a Spanish trollop, blundering over it in such a way as to make his answers almost unintelligible, and to require them to be repeated. But Monsieur de Nucingen's German barbarisms have already weighted this *Scene* too much to allow of the introduction of other sentences no less difficult to read, and hindering the rapid progress of the tale.

'Then you have papers to prove your right to the dignities of which you speak?' asked Camusot.

'Yes, Monsieur — my passport, a letter from his Catholic Majesty authorising my mission.—In short, if you will but send at once to the Spanish Embassy two lines, which I will write in your presence, I shall be identified. Then, if you wish for further evidence, I will write to His Eminence the High Almoner of France, and he will immediately send his private secretary.'

'And do you still pretend that you are dying?' asked

the magistrate. 'If you have really gone through all the sufferings you have complained of since your arrest, you ought to be dead by this time,' said Camusot ironically.

'You are simply trying the courage of an innocent man and the strength of his constitution,' said the prisoner mildly.

'Coquart, ring. Send for the prison doctor and an infirmary attendant.—We shall be obliged to remove your coat and proceed to verify the marks on your shoulder,' Camusot went on.

'I am in your hands, Monsieur.'

The prisoner then inquired whether the magistrate would be kind enough to explain to him what he meant by 'the marks,' and why they should be sought on his shoulder. The judge was prepared for this question.

'You are suspected of being Jacques Collin, an escaped convict, whose daring shrinks at nothing, not even at sacrilege!' said Camusot promptly, his eyes fixed on those of the prisoner.

Jacques Collin gave no sign, and did not colour; he remained quite calm, and assumed an air of guileless curiosity as he gazed at Camusot.

'I, Monsieur? A convict? May the Order I belong to and God above forgive you for such an error. Tell me what I can do to prevent your continuing to offer such an insult to the rights of free men, to the Church, and to the King my master.'

The judge made no reply to this, but explained to the Abbé that if he had been branded, a penalty at that time inflicted by law on all convicts sent to the hulks, the letters could be made to show by giving him a slap on the shoulder.

'Oh, Monsieur,' said Jacques Collin, 'it would indeed be unfortunate if my devotion to the Royal cause should prove fatal to me.'

'Explain yourself,' said the judge, 'that is what you are here for.'

'Well, Monsieur, I must have a great many scars on my back, for I was shot in the back as a traitor to my country while I was faithful to my King, by constitutionalists who left me for dead.'

'You were shot, and you are alive!' said Camusot.

'I had made friends with some of the soldiers, to whom certain pious persons had sent money, so they placed me so far off that only spent balls reached me, and the men aimed at my back. This is a fact that His Excellency the Ambassador can bear witness to——'

'This devil of a man has an answer for everything! However, so much the better,' thought Camusot, who assumed so much severity only to satisfy the demands of justice and of the police. 'How is it that a man of your character,' he went on, addressing the convict, 'should have been found in the house of the Baron de Nucingen's mistress—and such a mistress, a girl who had been a common prostitute!'

'This is why I was found in a courtesan's house, Monsieur,' replied Jacques Collin. 'But before telling you the reasons for my being there, I ought to mention that at the moment when I was just going upstairs I was seized with the first attack of my illness, and I had no time to speak to the girl. I knew of Mademoiselle Esther's intention of killing herself; and as young Lucien de Rubempré's interests were involved, and I have a particular affection for him for sacredly secret reasons, I was going to try to persuade the poor creature to give up the idea, suggested to her by despair. I meant to tell her that Lucien must certainly fail in his last attempt to win Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu; and I hoped that by telling her she had inherited seven millions of francs, I might give her courage to live.

'I am convinced, Monsieur le Juge, that I am a martyr to the secrets confided to me. By the suddenness of my illness I believe that I had been poisoned that

very morning, but my strong constitution has saved me. I know that a certain agent of the political police is dogging me, and trying to entangle me in some discreditable business.

'If, at my request, you had sent for a doctor on my arrival here, you would have had ample proof of what I am telling you as to the state of my health. Believe me, Monsieur, some persons far above our heads have some strong interest in getting me mistaken for some villain, so as to have a right to get rid of me. It is not all profit to serve a king ; they have their meannesses. The Church alone is faultless.'

It is impossible to do justice to the play of Jacques Collin's countenance as he carefully spun out this speech, sentence by sentence, for ten minutes ; and it was all so plausible, especially the mention of Corentin, that the lawyer was shaken.

'Will you confide to me the reasons of your affection for Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré ?'

'Can you not guess them ? I am sixty years of age, Monsieur—I implore you do not write it.—It is because —must I say it ?'

'It will be to your own advantage, and more particularly to Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré's, if you tell everything,' replied the judge.

'Because he is—Oh, God ! he is my son,' he gasped out with an effort.

And he fainted away.

'Do not write that down, Coquart,' said Camusot in an undertone.

Coquart rose to fetch a little phial of 'Four thieves' Vinegar.'

'If he is Jacques Collin, he is a splendid actor !' thought Camusot.

Coquart held the phial under the convict's nose, while the judge examined him with the keen eye of a lynx—and a magistrate.

'Take his wig off,' said Camusot, after waiting till the man recovered consciousness.

Jacques Collin heard, and quaked with terror, for he knew how vile an expression his face would assume.

'If you have not strength enough to take your wig off yourself—— Yes, Coquart, remove it,' said Camusot to his clerk.

Jacques Collin bent his head to the clerk with admirable resignation ; but then his head, bereft of that adornment, was hideous to behold in its natural aspect.

The sight of it left Camusot in the greatest uncertainty. While waiting for the doctor and the man from the infirmary, he set to work to classify and examine the various papers and the objects seized in Lucien's rooms. After carrying out their functions in the Rue Saint-Georges at Mademoiselle Esther's house, the police had searched the rooms at the Quai Malaquais.

'You have your hand on some letters from the Comtesse de Sérizy,' said Carlos Herrera. 'But I cannot imagine why you should have almost all Lucien's papers,' he added, with a smile of overwhelming irony at the judge.

Camusot, as he saw the smile, understood the bearing of the word 'almost.'

'Lucien de Rubempré is in custody under suspicion of being your accomplice,' said he, watching to see the effect of this news on his examinee.

'You have brought about a great misfortune, for he is as innocent as I am,' replied the sham Spaniard, without betraying the smallest agitation.

'We shall see. We have not as yet established your identity,' Camusot observed, surprised at the prisoner's indifference. 'If you are really Don Carlos Herrera, the position of Lucien Chardon will at once be completely altered.'

'To be sure, she became Madame Chardon—Made-

moiselle de Rubempré!' murmured Carlos. 'Ah! that was one of the greatest sins of my life.'

He raised his eyes to heaven, and by the movement of his lips seemed to be uttering a fervent prayer.

'But if you are Jacques Collin, and if he was, and knew that he was, the companion of an escaped convict, a sacrilegious wretch, all the crimes of which he is suspected by the law are more than probably true.'

Carlos Herrera sat like bronze as he heard this speech, very cleverly delivered by the judge, and his only reply to the words '*knew that he was*' and '*escaped convict*' was to lift his hands to heaven with a gesture of noble and dignified sorrow.

'Monsieur l'Abbé,' Camusot went on, with the greatest politeness, 'if you are Don Carlos Herrera, you will forgive us for what we are obliged to do in the interests of justice and truth.'

Jacques Collin detected a snare in the lawyer's very voice as he spoke the words 'Monsieur l'Abbé.' The man's face never changed; Camusot had looked for a gleam of joy, which might have been the first indication of his being a convict, betraying the exquisite satisfaction of a criminal deceiving his judge; but this hero of the hulks was strong in Machiavellian dissimulation.

'I am accustomed to diplomacy, and I belong to an Order of very austere discipline,' replied Jacques Collin, with apostolic mildness. 'I understand everything, and am inured to suffering. I should be free by this time if you had discovered in my room the hiding-place where I keep my papers—for I see you have none but unimportant documents.'

This was a finishing stroke to Camusot: Jacques Collin by his air of ease and simplicity had counteracted all the suspicions to which his appearance, unwigged, had given rise.

'Where are those papers?'

'I will tell you exactly if you will get a secretary

from the Spanish Embassy to accompany your messenger. He will take them and be answerable to you for the documents, for it is to me a matter of confidential duty —diplomatic secrets which would compromise his late Majesty Louis XVIII.—Indeed, Monsieur, it would be better—— However, you are a magistrate—and, after all, the Ambassador, to whom I refer the whole question, must decide.'

At this juncture the usher announced the arrival of the doctor and the infirmary attendant, who came in.

'Good morning, Monsieur Lebrun,' said Camusot to the doctor. 'I have sent for you to examine the state of health of this prisoner under suspicion. He says he has been poisoned and at the point of death since the day before yesterday; see if there is any risk in undressing him to look for the brand.'

Doctor Lebrun took Jacques Collin's hand, felt his pulse, asked to look at his tongue, and scrutinised him steadily. This inspection lasted about ten minutes.

'The prisoner has been suffering severely,' said the medical officer, 'but at this moment he is amazingly strong——'

'That spurious energy, Monsieur, is due to nervous excitement caused by my strange position,' said Jacques Collin, with the dignity of a bishop.

'That is possible,' said Monsieur Lebrun.

At a sign from Camusot the prisoner was stripped of everything but his trousers, even of his shirt, and the spectators might admire the hairy torso of a Cyclops. It was that of the Farnese Hercules at Naples in its colossal exaggeration.

'For what does nature intend a man of this build?' said Lebrun to the judge.

The usher brought in the ebony staff, which from time immemorial has been the insignia of his office, and is called his rod; he struck it several times over the place where the executioner had branded the fatal letters.

Seventeen spots appeared, irregularly distributed, but the most careful scrutiny could not recognise the shape of any letters. The usher indeed pointed out that the top bar of the letter T was shown by two spots, with an interval between of the length of that bar between the two points at each end of it, and that there was another spot where the bottom of the T should be.

'Still, that is quite uncertain,' said Camusot, seeing doubt in the expression of the prison doctor's countenance.

Carlos begged them to make the same experiment on the other shoulder and the middle of his back. About fifteen more such scars appeared, which, at the Spaniard's request, the doctor made a note of; and he pronounced that the man's back had been so extensively seamed by wounds that the brand would not show even if it had been made by the executioner.

An office-clerk now came in from the Préfecture, and handed a note to Monsieur Camusot, requesting an answer. After reading it the lawyer went to speak to Coquart, but in such a low voice that no one could catch a word. Only, by a glance from Camusot, Jacques Collin could guess that some information concerning him had been sent by the Préfet of Police.

'That friend of Peyrade's is still at my heels,' thought Jacques Collin. 'If only I knew him, I would get rid of him as I did of Contenson. If only I could see Asie once more!'

After signing a paper written by Coquart, the judge put it into an envelope and handed it to the clerk of the Delegate's office.

This is an indispensable auxiliary to justice. It is under the direction of a police commissioner, and consists of peace-officers who, with the assistance of the police commissioners of each district, carry into effect orders for searching the houses or apprehending the persons of those who are suspected of complicity in crimes and felonies. These functionaries in authority save

the examining magistrates a great deal of very precious time.

At a sign from the judge the prisoner was dressed by Monsieur Lebrun and the attendant, who then withdrew with the usher. Camusot sat down at his table and played with his pen.

'You have an aunt,' he suddenly said to Jacques Collin.

'An aunt?' echoed Don Carlos Herrera with amazement. 'Why, Monsieur, I have no relations. I am the unacknowledged son of the late Duke of Ossuna.'

But to himself he said, 'They are burning'—an allusion to the game of hot cockles, which is indeed a childlike symbol of the dreadful struggle between justice and the criminal.

'Pooh!' said Camusot. 'You still have an aunt living, Mademoiselle Jacqueline Collin, whom you placed in Esther's service under the eccentric name of Asie.'

Jacques Collin shrugged his shoulders with an indifference that was in perfect harmony with the cool curiosity he gave throughout to the judge's words, while Camusot studied him with cunning attention.

'Take care,' said Camusot; 'listen to me.'

'I am listening, sir.'

'Your aunt is a wardrobe dealer at the Temple; her business is managed by a demoiselle Paccard, the sister of a convict—herself a very good girl, known as la Romette. Justice is on the traces of your aunt, and in a few hours we shall have decisive evidence. The woman is wholly devoted to you——'

'Pray go on, Monsieur le Juge,' said Collin coolly, in answer to a pause; 'I am listening to you.'

'Your aunt, who is about five years older than you are, was formerly Marat's mistress—of odious memory. From that blood-stained source she derived the little fortune she possesses.

'From information I have received she must be a very

clever receiver of stolen goods, for no proofs have yet been found to commit her on. After Marat's death she seems, from the notes I have here, to have lived with a chemist who was condemned to death in the year XII. for issuing false coin. She was called as witness in the case. It was from this intimacy that she derived her knowledge of poisons.

'In 1812 and in 1816 she spent two years in prison for placing girls under age upon the streets.

'You were already convicted of forgery; you had left the banking house where your aunt had been able to place you as clerk, thanks to the education you had had, and the favour enjoyed by your aunt with certain persons for whose debaucheries she supplied victims.

'All this, prisoner, is not much like the dignity of the Dukes d'Ossuna.

'Do you persist in your denial?'

Jacques Collin sat listening to Monsieur Camusot, and thinking of his happy childhood at the College of the Oratorians, where he had been brought up, a meditation which lent him a truly amazed look. And in spite of his skill as a practised examiner, Camusot could bring no sort of expression to those placid features.

'If you have accurately recorded the account of myself I gave you at first,' said Jacques Collin, 'you can read it through again. I cannot alter the facts. I never went to the woman's house; how should I know who her cook was? The persons of whom you speak are utterly unknown to me.'

'Notwithstanding your denial, we shall proceed to confront you with persons who may succeed in diminishing your assurance.'

'A man who has been three times shot is used to anything,' replied Jacques Collin meekly.

Camusot proceeded to examine the seized papers while awaiting the return of the famous Bibi-Lupin, whose expedition was amazing; for at half-past eleven,

the inquiry having begun at ten o'clock, the usher came in to inform the judge in an undertone of Bibi-Lupin's arrival.

'Show him in,' replied M. Camusot.

Bibi-Lupin, who had been expected to exclaim, 'It is he,' as he came in, stood puzzled. He did not recognise his man in a face pitted with smallpox. This hesitancy startled the magistrate.

'It is his build, his height,' said the agent. 'Oh! yes, it is you, Jacques Collin!' he went on, as he examined his eyes, forehead, and ears. 'There are some things which no disguise can alter. . . . Certainly it is he, Monsieur Camusot. Jacques has the scar of a cut on his left arm. Take off his coat, and you will see . . .'

Jacques Collin was again obliged to take off his coat; Bibi-Lupin turned up his sleeve and showed the scar he had spoken of.

'It is the scar of a bullet,' replied Don Carlos Herrera. 'Here are several more.'

'Ah! It is certainly his voice,' cried Bibi-Lupin.

'Your certainty,' said Camusot, 'is merely an opinion; it is not proof.'

'I know that,' said Bibi-Lupin with deference. 'But I will bring witnesses. One of the boarders from the Maison Vauquer is here already,' said he, with an eye on Collin.

But the prisoner's set, calm face did not move a muscle.

'Show the person in,' said Camusot roughly, his dissatisfaction betraying itself in spite of his seeming indifference.

This irritation was not lost on Jacques Collin, who had not counted on the judge's sympathy, and sat lost in apathy, produced by his deep meditations in the effort to guess what the cause could be.

The usher now showed in Madame Poiret. At this

unexpected appearance the prisoner had a slight shiver, but his trepidation was not remarked by Camusot, who seemed to have made up his mind.

'What is your name?' asked he, proceeding to carry out the formalities introductory to all depositions and examinations.

Madame Poiret, a little old woman as white and wrinkled as a sweetbread, dressed in a dark-blue silk gown, gave her name as Christine Michelle Michonneau, wife of one Poiret, and her age as fifty-one years, said that she was born in Paris, lived in the Rue des Poules at the corner of the Rue des Postes, and that her business was that of lodging-house keeper.

'In 1818 and 1819,' said the judge, 'you lived, Madame, in a boarding-house kept by a Madame Vauquer?'

'Yes, Monsieur; it was there that I met Monsieur Poiret, a retired official, who became my husband, and whom I have nursed in his bed this twelvemonth past. Poor man! he is very bad; and I cannot be long away from him.'

'There was a certain Vautrin in the house at the time?' asked Camusot.

'Oh, Monsieur, that is quite a long story; he was a horrible man, from the galleys——'

'You helped to get him arrested?'

'That is not true, sir.

'You are in the presence of the Law; be careful,' said Monsieur Camusot severely.

Madame Poiret was silent.

'Try to remember,' Camusot went on. 'Do you recollect the man? Would you know him again?'

'I think so.'

'Is this the man?'

Madame Poiret put on her 'eye-preservers,' and looked at the Abbé Carlos Herrera.

'It is his build, his height; and yet—no—if—Mon-

sieur le Juge,' she said, 'if I could see his chest I should recognise him at once.'

The magistrate and his clerk could not help laughing, notwithstanding the gravity of their office; Jacques Collin joined in their hilarity, but discreetly. The prisoner had not put on his coat after Bibi-Lupin had removed it, and at a sign from the judge he obligingly opened his shirt.

'Yes, that is his fur trimming, sure enough!—But it has worn grey, Monsieur Vautrin,' cried Madame Poiret.

'What have you to say to that?' asked the judge of the prisoner.

'That she is mad,' replied Jacques Collin.

'Bless me! If I had a doubt—for his face is altered—that voice would be enough. He is the man who threatened me. Ah! and those are his eyes!'

'The police agent and this woman,' said Camusot, speaking to Jacques Collin, 'cannot possibly have conspired to say the same thing, for neither of them had seen you till now. How do you account for that?'

'Justice has blundered more conspicuously even than it does now in accepting the evidence of a woman who recognises a man by the hair on his chest and the suspicions of a police agent,' replied Jacques Collin. 'I am said to resemble a great criminal in voice, eyes, and build; that seems a little vague. As to the memory which would prove certain relations between Madame and my Sosie—which she does not blush to own—you yourself laughed at it. Allow me, Monsieur, in the interests of truth, which I am far more anxious to establish for my own sake than you can be for the sake of justice, to ask this lady—Madame Foiret——'

'Poiret.'

'Poret—excuse me, I am a Spaniard—whether she remembers the other persons who lived in this—what did you call the house?'

'A boarding-house,' said Madame Poiret.

'I do not know what that is.'

'A house where you can dine and breakfast by subscription.'

'You are right,' said Camusot, with a favourable nod to Jacques Collin, whose apparent good faith in suggesting means to arrive at some conclusion struck him greatly. 'Try to remember the boarders who were in the house at the time when Jacques Collin was apprehended.'

'There were Monsieur de Rastignac, Doctor Bianchon, Père Goriot, Mademoiselle Taillefer——'

'That will do,' said Camusot, steadily watching Jacques Collin, whose expression did not change. 'Well, about this Père Goriot?'

'He is dead,' said Madame Poiret.

'Monsieur,' said Jacques Collin, 'I have several times met Monsieur de Rastignac, a friend, I believe, of Madame de Nucingen's; and if it is the same, he certainly never supposed me to be the convict with whom these persons try to identify me.'

'Monsieur de Rastignac and Doctor Bianchon,' said the magistrate, 'both hold such a social position that their evidence, if it is in your favour, will be enough to procure your release.—Coquart, fill up a summons for each of them.'

The formalities attending Madame Poiret's examination were over in a few minutes; Coquart read aloud to her the notes he had made of the little scene, and she signed the paper; but the prisoner refused to sign, alleging his ignorance of the forms of French law.

'That is enough for to-day,' said Monsieur Camusot. 'You must be wanting food. I will have you taken back to the Conciergerie.'

'Alas! I am suffering too much to be able to eat,' said Jacques Collin.

Camusot was anxious to time Jacques Collin's return to coincide with the prisoners' hour of exercise in the prison yard; but he needed a reply from the Governor of the Conciergerie to the order he had given him in the morning, and he rang for the usher. The usher appeared, and told him that the porter's wife, from the house on the Quai Malaquais, had an important document to communicate with reference to Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré. This was so serious a matter that it put Camusot's intentions out of his head.

'Show her in,' said he.

'Beg your pardon; pray excuse me, gentlemen all,' said the woman, curtseying to the judge and the Abbé Carlos by turns. 'We were so worried by the Law—my husband and me—the twice when it has marched into our house, that we had forgotten a letter that was lying, for Monsieur Lucien, in our chest of drawers, which we paid ten sous for it, though it was posted in Paris, for it is very heavy, sir. Would you please to pay me back the postage? For God knows when we shall see our lodgers again!'

'Was this letter handed to you by the postman?' asked Camusot, after carefully examining the envelope.

'Yes, Monsieur.'

'Coquart, write full notes of this deposition.—Go on, my good woman; tell us your name and your business.' Camusot made the woman take the oath, and then he dictated the document.

While these formalities were being carried out, he was scrutinising the postmark, which showed the hours of posting and delivery, as well as the date of the day. And this letter, left for Lucien the day after Esther's death, had beyond a doubt been written and posted on the day of the catastrophe. Monsieur Camusot's amazement may therefore be imagined when he read

this letter, written and signed by her whom the law believed to have been the victim of a crime:—

'*Esther to Lucien.*

'Monday, *May* 13, 1830.

'My last day; ten in the morning.

'My Lucien,—I have not an hour to live. At eleven o'clock I shall be dead, and I shall die without a pang. I have paid fifty thousand francs for a neat little black currant, containing a poison that will kill me with the swiftness of lightning. And so, my darling, you may tell yourself, "My little Esther had no suffering."—And yet I shall suffer in writing these pages.

'The monster who has paid so dear for me, knowing that the day when I should know myself to be his would have no morrow—Nucingen has just left me, as drunk as a bear with his skin full of wine. For the first and last time in my life I have had the opportunity of comparing my old trade as a street hussy with the life of true love, of placing the tenderness which unfolds in the infinite above the horrors of a duty which longs to destroy itself and leave no room even for a kiss. Only such loathing could make death delightful.

'I have taken a bath; I should have liked to send for the father confessor of the convent where I was baptized, to have confessed and washed my soul. But I have had enough of prostitution; it would be profaning a sacrament; and besides, I feel myself cleansed in the waters of sincere repentance. God must do what He will with me.

'But enough of all this maudlin; for you I want to be your Esther to the last moment, not to bore you with my death, or the future, or God, who is good, and who would not be good if He were to torture me in the next world when I have endured so much misery in this.

'I have before me your beautiful portrait, painted by Madame de Mirbel. That sheet of ivory used to comfort me in your absence, I look at it with rapture as I write you my last thoughts, and tell you of the last throbbing of my heart. I shall enclose the miniature in this letter, for I cannot bear that it should be stolen or sold. The mere thought that what has been my great joy may lie behind a shop window, mixed up with the ladies and officers of the Empire, or a parcel of Chinese absurdities, is a small death to me. Destroy that picture, my sweetheart, wipe it out, never give it to any one—unless, indeed, the gift might win back the heart of that walking, well-dressed maypole, that Clotilde de Grandlieu, who will make you black and blue in her sleep, her bones are so sharp.—Yes, to that I consent, and then I shall still be of some use to you, as when I was alive. Oh! to give you pleasure, or only to make you laugh, I would have stood over a brazier with an apple in my mouth to cook it for you.—So my death even will be of service to you.—I should have marred your home.

'Oh! that Clotilde! I cannot understand her.—She might have been your wife, have borne your name, have never left you day or night, have belonged to you—and she could make difficulties! Only the Faubourg Saint-Germain can do that! and yet she has not ten pounds of flesh on her bones!

'Poor Lucien! Dear ambitious failure! I am thinking of your future life. Well, well! you will more than once regret your poor faithful dog, the good girl who would fly to serve you, who would have been dragged into a police court to secure your happiness, whose only occupation was to think of your pleasures and invent new ones, who was so full of love for you—in her hair, her feet, her ears—your *ballerina*, in short, whose every look was a benediction; who for six years has thought of nothing but you, who was so entirely your chattel that I have never been anything but an

effluence of your soul, as light is that of the sun. However, for lack of money and of honour, I can never be your wife. I have at any rate provided for your future by giving you all I have.

'Come as soon as you get this letter and take what you find under my pillow, for I do not trust the people about me. Understand that I mean to look beautiful when I am dead. I shall go to bed, and lay myself flat in an attitude—why not? Then I shall break the little pill against the roof of my mouth, and shall not be disfigured by any convulsion or by a ridiculous position.

'Madame de Sérizy has quarrelled with you, I know, because of me; but when she hears that I am dead, you see, dear pet, she will forgive. Make it up with her, and she will find you a suitable wife if the Grandlieus persist in their refusal.

'My dear, I do not want you to grieve too much when you hear of my death. To begin with, I must tell you that the hour of eleven on Monday morning, the thirteenth of May, is only the end of a long illness, which began on the day when, on the Terrace of Saint-Germain, you threw me back on my former line of life. The soul may be sick, as the body is. But the soul cannot submit stupidly to suffering like the body; the body does not uphold the soul as the soul upholds the body, and the soul sees a means of cure in the reflection which leads to the needlewoman's resource—the bushel of charcoal. You gave me a whole life the day before yesterday, when you said that if Clotilde still refused you, you would marry me. It would have been a great misfortune for us both; I should have been still more dead, so to speak—for there are more and less bitter deaths. The world would never have recognised us.

'For two months past I have been thinking of many things, I can tell you. A poor girl is in the mire, as I was before I went into the convent; men think her handsome, they make her serve their pleasure without

thinking any consideration necessary; they pack her off on foot after fetching her in a carriage; if they do not spit in her face, it is only because her beauty preserves her from such an indignity; but, morally speaking, they do worse. Well, and if this despised creature were to inherit five or six millions of francs, she would be courted by princes, bowed to with respect as she went past in her carriage, and might choose among the oldest names in France and Navarre. That world which would have cried *Raca* to us, on seeing two handsome creatures united and happy, always did honour to Madame de Staël, in spite of her "romances in real life," because she had two hundred thousand francs a year. The world, which grovels before money or glory, will not bow down before happiness or virtue—for I could have done good. Oh! how many tears I would have dried—as many as I have shed, I believe! Yes, I would have lived only for you and for charity.

'These are the thoughts that make death beautiful. So do not lament, my dear. Say often to yourself, "There were two good creatures, two beautiful creatures, who both died for me ungrudgingly, and who adored me." Keep a memory in your heart of Coralie and Esther, and go your way and prosper. Do you recollect the day when you pointed out to me a shrivelled old woman, in a melon-green bonnet and a puce wrapper, all over black grease-spots, the mistress of a poet before the Revolution, hardly thawed by the sun though she was sitting against the wall of the Tuileries and fussing over a pug—the vilest of pugs. She had had footmen and carriages, you know, and a fine house! And I said to you then, "How much better to be dead at thirty!"—Well, you thought I was melancholy, and you played all sorts of pranks to amuse me, and between two kisses I said, "Every day some pretty woman leaves the play before it is over!"—And I do not want to see the last piece; that is all.

'You must think me a great chatterbox; but this is my last effusion. I write as if I were talking to you, and I like to talk cheerfully. I have always had a horror of a dressmaker pitying herself. You know I knew how to die decently once before, on my return from that fatal opera-ball where the men said I had been a prostitute.

'No, no, my dear love, never give this portrait to any one! If you could know with what a gush of love I have sat losing myself in your eyes, looking at them with rapture during a pause I allowed myself, you would feel as you gathered up the affection with which I have tried to overlay the ivory, that the soul of your little pet is indeed there.

'A dead woman craving alms! That is a funny idea.—Come, I must learn to lie quiet in the grave.

'You have no idea how heroic my death would seem to some fools if they could know that Nucingen last night offered me two millions of francs if I would love him as I love you. He will be handsomely robbed when he hears that I have kept my word and died of him. I tried all I could still to breathe the air you breathe. I said to the fat scoundrel, "Do you want me to love you as you wish? To promise even that I will never see Lucien again?"—"What must I do?" he asked.—"Give me the two millions for him."—You should have seen his face! I could have laughed, if it had not been so tragical for me.

'"Spare yourself the trouble of refusing," said I; "I see you care more for your two millions than for me. A woman is always glad to know at what she is valued!" and I turned my back on him.

'In a few hours the old rascal will know that I was not in jest.

'Who will part your hair as nicely as I do? Pooh!—I will think no more of anything in life; I have but five minutes, I give them to God. Do not be jealous of Him, dear heart; I shall speak to Him of you, beseeching Him for your happiness as the price of my death,

and my punishment in the next world. I am vexed enough at having to go to hell. I should have liked to see the angels, to know if they are like you.

'Good-bye, my darling, good-bye! I give you all the blessing of my woes. Even in the grave I am your Esther.

'It is striking eleven. I have said my last prayers. I am going to bed to die. Once more, farewell! I wish that the warmth of my hand could leave my soul there where I press a last kiss—and once more I must call you my dearest love, though you are the cause of the death of your Esther.'

A vague feeling of jealousy tightened on the magistrate's heart as he read this letter, the only letter from a suicide he had ever found written with such lightness, though it was a feverish lightness, and the last effort of a blind affection.

'What is there in the man that he should be loved so well?' thought he, saying what every man says who has not the gift of attracting women.

'If you can prove not merely that you are not Jacques Collin and an escaped convict, but that you are in fact Don Carlos Herrera, canon of Toledo, and secret envoy of his Majesty Ferdinand VII.,' said he, addressing the prisoner, 'you will be released; for the impartiality demanded by my office requires me to tell you that I have this moment received a letter, written by Mademoiselle Esther Gobseck, in which she declares her intention of killing herself, and expresses suspicions as to her servants, which would seem to point to them as the thieves who have made off with the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs.'

As he spoke Monsieur Camusot was comparing the writing of the letter with that of the will; and it seemed to him self-evident that the same person had written both.

'Monsieur, you were in too great a hurry to believe

in a murder; do not be too hasty in believing in a theft.'

'Heh!' said Camusot, scrutinising the prisoner with a piercing eye.

'Do not suppose that I am compromising myself by telling you that the sum may possibly be recovered,' said Jacques Collin, making the judge understand that he saw his suspicions. 'That poor girl was much loved by those about her; and if I were free, I would undertake to search for this money, which no doubt belongs to the being I love best in the world—to Lucien!—Will you allow me to read that letter; it will not take long? It is evidence of my dear boy's innocence—you cannot fear that I shall destroy it—nor that I shall talk about it; I am in solitary confinement.'

'In confinement! You will be so no longer,' cried the magistrate. 'It is I who must beg you to get well as soon as possible. Refer to your ambassador if you choose——'

And he handed the letter to Jacques Collin. Camusot was glad to be out of a difficulty, to be able to satisfy the public prosecutor, Mesdames de Maufrigneuse and de Sérizy. Nevertheless, he studied his prisoner's face with cold curiosity while Collin read Esther's letter; in spite of the apparent genuineness of the feelings it expressed, he said to himself—

'But it is a face worthy of the hulks, all the same!'

'That is the way to love!' said Jacques Collin, returning the letter. And he showed Camusot a face bathed in tears.

'If only you knew him,' he went on, 'so youthful, so innocent a soul, so splendidly handsome, a child, a poet!—The impulse to sacrifice oneself to him is irresistible, to satisfy his lightest wish. That dear boy is so fascinating when he chooses——'

'And so,' said the magistrate, making a final effort to

discover the truth, 'you cannot possibly be Jacques Collin——'

'No, Monsieur,' replied the convict.

And Jacques Collin was more entirely Don Carlos Herrera than ever. In his anxiety to complete his work he went up to the judge, led him to the window, and gave himself the airs of a prince of the Church, assuming a confidential tone—

'I am so fond of that boy, Monsieur, that if it were needful, to spare that idol of my heart a mere discomfort even, that I should be the criminal you take me for, I would surrender,' said he in an undertone. 'I would follow the example of the poor girl who has killed herself for his benefit. And I beg you, Monsieur, to grant me a favour—namely, to set Lucien at liberty forthwith.'

'My duty forbids it,' said Camusot very good-naturedly; 'but if a sinner may make a compromise with heaven, justice too has its softer side, and if you can give me sufficient reasons—speak; your words will not be taken down.'

'Well, then,' Jacques Collin went on, taken in by Camusot's apparent goodwill, 'I know what that poor boy is suffering at this moment; he is capable of trying to kill himself when he finds himself a prisoner——'

'Oh! as to that!' said Camusot with a shrug.

'You do not know whom you will oblige by obliging me,' added Jacques Collin, trying to harp on another string. 'You will be doing a service to others more powerful than any Comtesse de Sérizy or Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, who will never forgive you for having had their letters in your chambers——' and he pointed to two packets of perfumed papers. 'My Order has a good memory.'

'Monsieur,' said Camusot, 'that is enough. You must find better reasons to give me. I am as much interested in the prisoner as in public vengeance.'

'Believe me, then, I know Lucien; he has the soul of a woman, of a poet, and a southerner, without persistency or will,' said Jacques Collin, who fancied that he saw that he had won the judge over. 'You are convinced of the young man's innocence, do not torture him, do not question him. Give him that letter, tell him that he is Esther's heir, and restore him to freedom. If you act otherwise, you will bring despair on yourself; whereas, if you simply release him, I will explain to you—keep me still in solitary confinement—to-morrow, or this evening, everything that may strike you as mysterious in the case, and the reasons for the persecution of which I am the object. But it will be at the risk of my life; a price has been set on my head these six years past. . . . Lucien free, rich, and married to Clotilde de Grandlieu, and my task on earth will be done; I shall no longer try to save my skin.—My persecutor was a spy under your late King.'

'What, Corentin?'

'Ah! Is his name Corentin? Thank you, Monsieur. Well, will you promise to do as I ask you?'

'A magistrate can make no promises.—Coquart, tell the usher and the gendarmes to take the prisoner back to the Conciergerie.—I will give orders that you are to have a private room,' he added pleasantly, with a slight nod to the convict.

Struck by Jacques Collin's request, and remembering how he had insisted that he wished to be examined first as a privilege to his state of health, Camusot's suspicions were aroused once more. Allowing his vague doubts to make themselves heard, he noticed that the self-styled dying man was walking off with the strength of a Hercules, having abandoned all the tricks he had aped so well on appearing before the magistrate.

'Monsieur!'

Jacques Collin turned round.

'Notwithstanding your refusal to sign the document,

my clerk will read you the minutes of your examination.'

The prisoner was evidently in excellent health; the readiness with which he came back, and sat down by the clerk, was a fresh light to the magistrate's mind.

'You have got well very suddenly!' said Camusot.

'Caught!' thought Jacques Collin; and he replied—

'Joy, Monsieur, is the only panacea.—That letter, the proof of innocence of which I had no doubt—these are the grand remedy.'

The judge kept a meditative eye on the prisoner when the usher and the gendarmes again took him in charge. Then, with a start like a waking man, he tossed Esther's letter across to the table where his clerk sat, saying—

'Coquart, copy that letter.'

If it is natural to man to be suspicious as to some favour required of him when it is antagonistic to his interests or his duty, and sometimes even when it is a matter of indifference, this feeling is law to an examining magistrate. The more this prisoner—whose identity was not yet ascertained—pointed to clouds on the horizon in the event of Lucien's being examined, the more necessary did the interrogatory seem to Camusot. Even if this formality had not been required by the Code and by common practice, it was indispensable as bearing on the identification of the Abbé Carlos. There is in every walk of life the business conscience. In default of curiosity Camusot would have examined Lucien as he had examined Jacques Collin, with all the cunning which the most honest magistrate allows himself to use in such cases. The services he might render and his own promotion were secondary in Camusot's mind to his anxiety to know or guess the truth, even if he should never tell it.

He stood drumming on the window-pane while following the river-like current of his conjectures, for

in these moods thought is like a stream flowing through many countries. Magistrates, in love with truth, are like jealous women; they give way to a thousand hypotheses, and probe them with the dagger point of suspicion, as the sacrificing priest of old eviscerated his victims; thus they arrive, not perhaps at truth, but at probability, and at last see the truth beyond. A woman cross-questions the man she loves as the judge cross-questions a criminal. In such a frame of mind, a glance, a word, a tone of voice, the slightest hesitation is enough to certify the hidden fact—treason or crime.

'The style in which he depicted his devotion to his son—if he is his son—is enough to make me think that he was in the girl's house to keep an eye on the plunder; and never suspecting that the dead woman's pillow covered a will, he no doubt annexed, for his son, the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs as a precaution. That is why he can promise to recover the money.

'M. de Rubempré owes it to himself and to justice to account for his father's position in the world——

'And he offers me the protection of his Order—His Order!—if I do not examine Lucien——'

This thought gave him pause.

As has been seen, a magistrate conducts an examination exactly as he thinks proper. He is at liberty to display his acumen or be absolutely blunt. An examination may be everything or nothing. Therein lies the favour.

Camusot rang. The usher had returned. He was sent to fetch Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré with an injunction to prohibit his speaking to anybody on his way up. It was by this time two in the afternoon.

'There is some secret,' said the judge to himself, 'and that secret must be very important. My amphibious friend—since he is neither priest, nor secular, nor convict, nor Spaniard, though he wants to hinder his *protégé* from letting out something dreadful—argues thus: "The

poet is weak and effeminate; he is not like me, a Hercules in diplomacy, and you will easily wring our secret from him."—Well, we will get everything out of this innocent.'

And he sat tapping the edge of his table with the ivory paper-knife, while Coquart copied Esther's letter.

How whimsical is the action of our faculties! Camusot conceived of every crime as possible, and overlooked the only one that the prisoner had now committed—the forgery of the will for Lucien's advantage. Let those whose envy vents itself on magistrates think for a moment of their life spent in perpetual suspicion, of the torments these men must inflict on their minds, for civil cases are not less tortuous than criminal examinations, and it will occur to them perhaps that the priest and the lawyer wear an equally heavy coat of mail, equally furnished with spikes in the lining. However, every profession has its hair shirt and its Chinese puzzles.

It was about two o'clock when Monsieur Camusot saw Lucien de Rubempré come in, pale, worn, his eyes red and swollen, in short, in a state of dejection which enabled the magistrate to compare nature with art, the really dying man with the stage performance. His walk from the Conciergerie to the judge's chambers, between two gendarmes, and preceded by the usher, had put the crowning touch to Lucien's despair. It is the poet's nature to prefer execution to condemnation.

As he saw this being, so completely bereft of the moral courage which is the essence of a judge, and which the last prisoner had so strongly manifested, Monsieur Camusot disdained the easy victory; and this scorn enabled him to strike a decisive blow, since it left him, on the ground, that horrible clearness of mind which the marksman feels when he is firing at a puppet.

'Collect yourself, Monsieur de Rubempré; you are in the presence of a magistrate who is eager to repair

the mischief done involuntarily by the law when a man is taken into custody on suspicion that has no foundation. I believe you to be innocent, and you will soon be at liberty.—Here is the evidence of your innocence; it is a letter kept for you during your absence by your porter's wife; she has just brought it here. In the commotion caused by the visitation of justice and the news of your arrest at Fontainebleau, the woman forgot the letter which was written by Mademoiselle Esther Gobseck.—Read it!'

Lucien took the letter, read it, and melted into tears. He sobbed, and could not say a single word. At the end of a quarter of an hour, during which Lucien with great difficulty recovered his self-command, the clerk laid before him the copy of the letter, and begged him to sign a footnote certifying that the copy was faithful to the original, and might be used in its stead 'on all occasions in the course of this preliminary inquiry,' giving him the option of comparing the two; but Lucien, of course, took Coquart's word for its accuracy.

'Monsieur,' said the lawyer, with friendly good nature, 'it is nevertheless impossible that I should release you without carrying out the legal formalities, and asking you some questions.—It is almost as a witness that I require you to answer. To such a man as you I think it is almost unnecessary to point out that the oath to tell the whole truth is not in this case a mere appeal to your conscience, but a necessity for your own sake, your position having been for a time somewhat ambiguous. The truth can do you no harm, be it what it may; falsehood will send you to trial, and compel me to send you back to the Conciergerie; whereas if you answer fully to my questions, you will sleep to-night in your own house, and be rehabilitated by this paragraph in the papers: "Monsieur de Rubempré, who was arrested yesterday at Fontainebleau, was set at liberty after a very brief examination."'

This speech made a deep impression on Lucien; and the judge, seeing the temper of his prisoner, added—

'I may repeat to you that you were suspected of being accessory to the murder by poison of this Demoiselle Esther. Her suicide is clearly proved, and there is an end of that; but a sum of seven hundred and fifty thousand francs has been stolen, which she had disposed of by will, and you are the legatee. This is a felony. The crime was perpetrated before the discovery of the will.

'Now there is reason to suppose that a person who loves you as much as you loved Mademoiselle Esther committed the theft for your benefit.—Do not interrupt me,' Camusot went on, seeing that Lucien was about to speak, and commanding silence by a gesture; 'I am asking you nothing so far. I am anxious to make you understand how deeply your honour is concerned in this question. Give up the false and contemptible notion of the honour binding two accomplices, and tell the whole truth.'

The reader must already have observed the extreme disproportion of the weapons in this conflict between the prisoner under suspicion and the examining judge. Absolute denial when skilfully used has in its favour its positive simplicity, and sufficiently defends the criminal; but it is, in a way, a coat of mail which becomes crushing as soon as the stiletto of cross-examination finds a joint in it. As soon as mere denial is ineffectual in face of certain proven facts, the examinee is entirely at the judge's mercy.

Now, supposing that a sort of half-criminal, like Lucien, might, if he were saved from the first shipwreck of his honesty, amend his ways, and become a useful member of society, he will be lost in the pitfalls of his examination.

The judge has the driest possible record drawn up of the proceedings, a faithful analysis of the questions and answers; but no trace remains of his insidiously paternal

addresses or his captious remonstrances, such as this speech. The judges of the superior courts see the results, but see nothing of the means. Hence, as some experienced persons have thought, it would be a good plan that, as in England, a jury should hear the examination. For a short while France enjoyed the benefit of this system. Under the Code of Brumaire of the year IV., this body was known as the examining jury, as distinguished from the trying jury. As to the final trial, if we should restore the examining jury, it would have to be the function of the superior courts without the aid of a jury.

'And now,' said Camusot, after a pause, 'what is your name?—Attention, Monsieur Coquart!' said he to the clerk.

'Lucien Chardon de Rubempré.'

'And you were born——?'

'At Angoulême.' And Lucien named the day, month, and year.

'You inherited no fortune?'

'None whatever.'

'And yet, during your first residence in Paris, you spent a great deal, as compared with your small income?'

'Yes, Monsieur; but at that time I had a most devoted friend in Mademoiselle Coralie, and I was so unhappy as to lose her. It was my grief at her death that made me return to my country home.'

'That is right, Monsieur,' said Camusot; 'I commend your frankness; it will be thoroughly appreciated.'

Lucien, it will be seen, was prepared to make a clean breast of it.

'On your return to Paris you lived even more expensively than before,' Camusot went on. 'You lived like a man who might have about sixty thousand francs a year.'

'Yes, Monsieur.'

'Who supplied you with the money?'

'My protector, the Abbé Carlos Herrera.'

'Where did you meet him?'

'We met when travelling, just as I was about to be quit of life by committing suicide.'

'You never heard him spoken of by your family—by your mother?

'Never.'

'Can you remember the year and the month when you first became connected with Mademoiselle Esther?'

'Towards the end of 1823, at a small theatre on the Boulevard.'

'At first she was an expense to you?'

'Yes, Monsieur.'

'Lately, in the hope of marrying Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, you purchased the ruins of the Château de Rubempré, you added land to the value of a million francs, and you told the family of Grandlieu that your sister and your brother-in-law had just come into a considerable fortune, and that their liberality had supplied you with the money.—Did you tell the Grandlieus this, Monsieur?'

'Yes, Monsieur.'

'You do not know the reason why the marriage was broken off?'

'Not in the least, Monsieur.'

'Well, the Grandlieus sent one of the most respectable attorneys in Paris to see your brother-in-law and inquire into the facts. At Angoulême this lawyer, from the statements of your sister and brother-in-law, learnt that they not only had hardly lent you any money, but also that their inheritance consisted of land, of some extent no doubt, but that the whole amount of invested capital was not more than about two hundred thousand francs.—Now you cannot wonder that such people as the Grandlieus should reject a fortune of which the source is more than doubtful. This, Monsieur, is what a lie has led to——'

Lucien was petrified by this revelation, and the little presence of mind he had preserved deserted him.

'Remember,' said Camusot, 'that the police and the law know all they want to know.—And now,' he went on, recollecting Jacques Collin's assumed paternity, 'do you know who this pretended Carlos Herrera is?'

'Yes, Monsieur; but I knew it too late.'

'Too late! How? Explain yourself.'

'He is not a priest, not a Spaniard, he is——'

'An escaped convict?' said the judge eagerly.

'Yes,' replied Lucien, 'when he told me the fatal secret, I was already under obligations to him; I had fancied I was befriended by a respectable priest.'

'Jacques Collin——' said Monsieur Camusot, beginning a sentence.

'Yes,' said Lucien, 'his name is Jacques Collin.'

'Very good. Jacques Collin has just now been identified by another person, and though he denies it, he does so, I believe, in your interest. But I asked whether you knew who the man is in order to prove another of Jacques Collin's impostures.'

Lucien felt as though he had hot iron in his inside as he heard this alarming statement.

'Do you not know,' Camusot went on, 'that in order to give colour to the extraordinary affection he has for you, he declares that he is your father?'

'He! My father?—Oh, Monsieur, did he tell you that?'

'Have you any suspicion of where the money came from that he used to give you? For, if I am to believe the evidence of the letter you have in your hand, that poor girl, Mademoiselle Esther, must have done you lately the same services as Coralie formerly rendered you. Still, for some years, as you have just admitted, you lived very handsomely without receiving anything from her.'

'It is I who should ask you, Monsieur, whence

convicts get their money ! Jacques Collin my father !—Oh, my poor mother !' and Lucien burst into tears.

'Coquart, read out to the prisoner that part of Carlos Herrera's examination in which he said that Lucien de Rubempré was his son.'

The poet listened in silence, and with a look that was terrible to behold.

'I am done for !' he cried.

'A man is not done for who is faithful to the path of honour and truth,' said the judge.

'But you will commit Jacques Collin for trial ?' said Lucien.

'Undoubtedly,' said Camusot, who aimed at making Lucien talk. 'Speak out.'

But in spite of all his persuasion and remonstrances, Lucien would say no more. Reflection had come too late, as it does to all men who are the slaves of impulse. There lies the difference between the poet and the man of action; one gives way to feeling to reproduce it in living images, his judgment comes in after; the other feels and judges both at once.

Lucien remained pale and gloomy; he saw himself at the bottom of the precipice, down which the examining judge had rolled him by the apparent candour which had entrapped his poet's soul. He had betrayed, not his benefactor, but an accomplice who had defended their position with the courage of a lion, and a skill that showed no flaw. Where Jacques Collin had saved everything by his daring, Lucien, the man of brains, had lost all by his lack of intelligence and reflection. This infamous lie against which he revolted had screened a yet more infamous truth.

Utterly confounded by the judge's skill, overpowered by his cruel dexterity, by the swiftness of the blows he had dealt him while making use of the errors of a life laid bare as probes to search his conscience, Lucien sat like an animal which the butcher's pole-axe had failed to

kill. Free and innocent when he came before the judge, in a moment his own avowal had made him feel criminal.

To crown all, as a final grave irony, Camusot, cold and calm, pointed out to Lucien that his self-betrayal was the result of a misapprehension. Camusot was thinking of Jacques Collin's announcing himself as Lucien's father; while Lucien, wholly absorbed by his fear of seeing his confederacy with an escaped convict made public, had imitated the famous inadvertency of the murderers of Ibycus.

One of Royer-Collard's most famous achievements was proclaiming the constant triumph of natural feeling over engrafted sentiments, and defending the cause of anterior oaths by asserting that the law of hospitality, for instance, ought to be regarded as binding to the point of negativing the obligation of a judicial oath. He promulgated this theory, in the face of the world, from the French tribune; he boldly upheld conspirators, showing that it was human to be true to friendship rather than to the tyrannical laws brought out of the social arsenal to be adjusted to circumstances. And, indeed, natural rights have laws which have never been codified, but which are more effectual and better known than those laid down by society. Lucien had misapprehended, to his cost, the law of cohesion, which required him to be silent and leave Jacques Collin to protect himself; nay, more, he had accused him. In his own interests the man ought always to be, to him, Carlos Herrera.

Monsieur Camusot was rejoicing in his triumph; he had secured two criminals. He had crushed with the hand of justice one of the favourites of fashion, and he had found the undiscoverable Jacques Collin. He would be regarded as one of the cleverest of examining judges. So he left his prisoner in peace; but he was studying this speechless consternation, and he saw drops of sweat

collect on the miserable face, swell and fall, mingled with two streams of tears.

'Why should you weep, Monsieur de Rubempré? You are, as I have told you, Mademoiselle Esther's legatee, she having no heirs nor near relations, and her property amounts to nearly eight millions of francs if the lost seven hundred and fifty thousand francs are recovered.'

This was the last blow to the poor wretch. 'If you do not lose your head for ten minutes,' Jacques Collin had said in his note, and Lucien by keeping cool would have gained all his desire. He might have paid his debt to Jacques Collin and have cut him adrift, have been rich, and have married Mademoiselle de Grandlieu. Nothing could more eloquently demonstrate the power with which the examining judge is armed, as a consequence of the isolation or separation of persons under suspicion, or the value of such a communication as Asie had conveyed to Jacques Collin.

'Ah, Monsieur!' replied Lucien, with the satirical bitterness of a man who makes a pedestal of his utter overthrow, 'how appropriate is the phrase in legal slang "to *undergo* examination." For my part, if I had to choose between the physical torture of past ages and the moral torture of our day, I would not hesitate to prefer the sufferings inflicted of old by the executioner.—What more do you want of me?' he added haughtily.

'In this place, Monsieur,' said the magistrate, answering the poet's pride with mocking arrogance, 'I alone have a right to ask questions.'

'I had the right to refuse to answer them,' muttered the hapless Lucien, whose wits had come back to him with perfect lucidity.

'Coquart, read the minutes to the prisoner.'

'I am the prisoner once more,' said Lucien to himself.

While the clerk was reading, Lucien came to a

determination which compelled him to smooth down Monsieur Camusot. When Coquart's drone ceased, the poet started like a man who has slept through a noise to which his ears are accustomed, and who is roused by its cessation.

'You have to sign the report of your examination,' said the judge.'

'And am I at liberty ?' asked Lucien, ironical in his turn.

'Not yet,' said Camusot; 'but to-morrow, after being confronted with Jacques Collin, you will no doubt be free. Justice must now ascertain whether or no you are accessory to the crimes this man may have committed since his escape so long ago as 1820. However, you are no longer in the secret cells. I will write to the Governor to give you a better room.'

'Shall I find writing materials ?'

'You can have anything supplied to you that you ask for; I will give orders to that effect by the usher who will take you back.'

Lucien mechanically signed the minutes and initialled the notes in obedience to Coquart's indications with the meekness of a resigned victim. A single fact will show what a state he was in better, than the minutest description. The announcement that he would be confronted with Jacques Collin had at once dried the drops of sweat from his brow, and his dry eyes glittered with a terrible light. In short, he became, in an instant as brief as a lightning flash, what Jacques Collin was—a man of iron.

In men whose nature is like Lucien's, a nature which Jacques Collin had so thoroughly fathomed, these sudden transitions from a state of absolute demoralisation to one that is, so to speak, metallic,—so extreme is the tension of every vital force,—are the most startling phenomena of mental vitality. The will surges up like the lost waters of a spring; it diffuses itself throughout the machinery

that lies ready for the action of the unknown matter that constitutes it; and then the corpse is a man again, and the man rushes on full of energy for a supreme struggle.

Lucien laid Esther's letter next his heart, with the miniature she had returned to him. Then he haughtily bowed to Monsieur Camusot, and went off with a firm step down the corridors, between two gendarmes.

'That is a deep scoundrel!' said the judge to his clerk, to avenge himself for the crushing scorn the poet had displayed. 'He thought he might save himself by betraying his accomplice.'

'Of the two,' said Coquart timidly, 'the convict is the most thorough-paced.'

'You are free for the rest of the day, Coquart,' said the lawyer. 'We have done enough. Send away any case that is waiting, to be called to-morrow.—Ah! and you must go at once to the public prosecutor's chambers and ask if he is still there; if so, ask him if he can give me a few minutes. Yes; he will not be gone,' he added, looking at a common clock in a wooden case painted green with gilt lines. 'It is but a quarter-past three.'

These examinations, which are so quickly read, being written down at full length, questions and answers alike, take up an enormous amount of time. This is one of the reasons of the slowness of these preliminaries to a trial and of these imprisonments 'on suspicion.' To the poor this is ruin, to the rich it is disgrace; to them only immediate release can in any degree repair, so far as possible, the disaster of an arrest.

This is why the two scenes here related had taken up the whole of the time spent by Asie in deciphering her master's orders, in getting a Duchess out of her boudoir, and putting some energy into Madame de Sérizy.

At this moment Camusot, who was anxious to get the

full benefit of his cleverness, took the two documents, read them through, and promised himself that he would show them to the public prosecutor and take his opinion on them. During this meditation, his usher came back to tell him that Madame la Comtesse de Sérizy's man-servant insisted on speaking with him. At a nod from Camusot a servant out of livery came in, looked first at the usher, and then at the magistrate, and said, 'I have the honour of speaking to Monsieur Camusot?'

'Yes,' replied the lawyer and his clerk.

Camusot took a note which the servant offered him, and read as follows:—

'For the sake of many interests which will be obvious to you, my dear Camusot, do not examine Monsieur de Rubempré. We have brought ample proofs of his innocence that he may be released forthwith.

'D. de Maufrigneuse.

'L. de Sérizy.

'*P.S.*—Burn this note.'

Camusot understood at once that he had blundered preposterously in laying snares for Lucien, and he began by obeying the two fine ladies—he lighted a taper, and burnt the letter written by the Duchess. The man bowed respectfully.

'Then Madame de Sérizy is coming here?' asked Camusot.

'The carriage was being brought round.'

At this moment Coquart came in to tell Monsieur Camusot that the public prosecutor expected him.

Oppressed by the blunder he had committed, in view of his ambition, though to the better ends of justice, the lawyer, in whom seven years' experience had perfected the sharpness that comes to a man who in his practice has had to measure his wits against the *grisettes* of Paris, was anxious to have some shield against the resentment

of two women of fashion. The taper in which he had burnt the note was still alight, and he used it to seal up the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse's notes to Lucien—about thirty in all—and Madame de Sérizy's somewhat voluminous correspondence.

Then he waited on the public prosecutor.

The Palais de Justice is a perplexing maze of buildings piled one above another, some fine and dignified, others very mean, the whole disfigured by its lack of unity. The Salle des Pas-Perdus is the largest known hall, but its nakedness is hideous, and distresses the eye. This vast Cathedral of the Law crushes the Supreme Court. The Galerie Marchande ends in two drain-like passages. From this corridor there is a double staircase, a little larger than that of the Criminal Courts, and under it a large double door. The stairs lead down to one of the Assize Courts, and the doors open into another. In some years the number of crimes committed in the circuit of the Seine is great enough to necessitate the sitting of two Benches.

Close by are the public prosecutor's offices, the attorney's room and library, the chambers of the attorney-general, and those of the public prosecutor's deputies. All these purlieus, to use a generic term, communicate by narrow spiral stairs and the dark passages, which are a disgrace to the architecture not of Paris only, but of all France. The interior arrangement of the sovereign court of justice outdoes our prisons in all that is most hideous. The writer describing our manners and customs would shrink from the necessity of depicting the squalid corridor of about a mètre in width, in which the witnesses wait in the Superior Criminal Court. As to the stove which warms the court itself, it would disgrace a café on the Boulevard Mont-Parnasse.

The public prosecutor's private room forms part of an octagon wing flanking the Galerie Marchande, built out recently in regard to the age of the structure, over the

prison yard, outside the women's quarters. All this part of the Palais is overshadowed by the lofty and noble edifice of the Sainte-Chapelle. And all is solemn and silent.

Monsieur de Granville, a worthy successor of the great magistrates of the ancient Parlement, would not leave the Palais without coming to some conclusion in the matter of Lucien. He expected to hear from Camusot, and the judge's message had plunged him into the involuntary suspense which waiting produces on even the strongest minds. He had been sitting in the window-bay of his private room; he rose, and walked up and down, for having lingered in the morning to intercept Camusot, he had found him dull of apprehension; he was vaguely uneasy and worried.

And this was why.

The dignity of his high functions forbade his attempting to fetter the perfect independence of the inferior judge, and yet this trial nearly touched the honour and good name of his best friend and warmest supporter, the Comte de Sérizy, Minister of State, member of the Privy Council, Vice-President of the State Council, and prospective Chancellor of the Realm, in the event of the death of the noble old man who held that august office. It was Monsieur de Sérizy's misfortune to adore his wife 'through fire and water,' and he always shielded her with his protection. Now the public prosecutor fully understood the terrible fuss that would be made in the world and at court if a crime should be proved against a man whose name had been so often and so malignantly linked with that of the Countess.

'Ah!' he sighed, folding his arms, 'formerly the supreme authority could take refuge in an appeal. Nowadays our mania for equality'—he dared not say *for Legality*, as a poetic orator in the Chamber courageously admitted a short while since—'is the death of us.'

This noble magistrate knew all the fascination and the

miseries of an illicit attachment. Esther and Lucien, as we have seen, had taken the rooms where the Comte de Granville had lived secretly on connubial terms with Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille, and whence she had fled one day, lured away by a villain. (See *A Double Marriage.*)

At the very moment when the public prosecutor was saying to himself, 'Camusot is sure to have done something silly,' the examining magistrate knocked twice at the door of his room.

'Well, my dear Camusot, how is that case going on that I spoke of this morning?'

'Badly, Monsieur le Comte; read and judge for yourself.'

He held out the minutes of the two examinations to Monsieur de Granville, who took up his eyeglass and went to the window to read them. He had soon run through them.

'You have done your duty,' said the Count in an agitated voice. 'It is all over. The law must take its course. You have shown so much skill, that you need never fear being deprived of your appointment as examining judge——'

If Monsieur de Granville had said to Camusot, 'You will remain an examining judge to your dying day,' he could not have been more explicit than in making this polite speech. Camusot was cold in his very marrow.

'Madame la Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, to whom I owe much, had desired me . . .'

'Oh yes, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse is Madame de Sérizy's friend,' said Granville, interrupting him. 'To be sure.—You have allowed nothing to influence you, I perceive. And you did well, sir; you will be a great magistrate.'

At this instant the Comte Octave de Bauvan opened the door without knocking, and said to the Comte de Granville—

'I have brought you a fair lady, my dear fellow, who

did not know which way to turn ; she was on the point of losing herself in our labyrinth——'

And Comte Octave led in by the hand the Comtesse de Sérizy, who had been wandering about the place for the last quarter of an hour.

'What, you here, Madame!' exclaimed the public prosecutor, pushing forward his own armchair, 'and at this moment! This, Madame, is Monsieur Camusot,' he added, introducing the judge.—'Bauvan,' said he to the distinguished ministerial orator of the Restoration, 'wait for me in the president's chambers; he is still there, and I will join you.'

Comte Octave de Bauvan understood that not merely was he in the way, but that Monsieur de Granville wanted an excuse for leaving his room.

Madame de Sérizy had not made the mistake of coming to the Palais de Justice in her handsome carriage with a blue hammer-cloth and coats-of-arms, her coachman in gold lace, and two footmen in breeches and silk stockings. Just as they were starting Asie impressed on the two great ladies the need for taking the hackney coach in which she and the Duchess had arrived, and she had likewise insisted on Lucien's mistress adopting the costume which is to women what a grey cloak was of yore to men. The Countess wore a plain brown dress, an old black shawl, and a velvet bonnet from which the flowers had been removed, and the whole covered up under a thick lace veil.

'You received our note?' said she to Camusot, whose dismay she mistook for respectful admiration.

'Alas! but too late, Madame la Comtesse,' replied the lawyer, whose tact and wit failed him excepting in his chambers and in presence of a prisoner.

'Too late! How?'

She looked at Monsieur de Granville, and saw consternation written in his face. 'It cannot be, it must not be too late!' she added, in the tone of a despot.

Women, pretty women, in the position of Madame de Sérizy, are the spoilt children of French civilisation. If the women of other countries knew what a woman of fashion is in Paris, a woman of wealth and rank, they would all want to come and enjoy that splendid royalty. The women who recognise no bonds but those of propriety, no law but the petty charter which has been more than once alluded to in this *Comédie Humaine* as the ladies' Code, laugh at the statutes framed by men. They say everything, they do not shrink from any blunder or hesitate at any folly, for they all accept the fact that they are irresponsible beings, answerable for nothing on earth but their good repute and their children. They say the most preposterous things with a laugh, and are ready on every occasion to repeat the speech made in the early days of her married life by pretty Madame de Bauvan to her husband, whom she came to fetch away from the Palais: 'Make haste and pass sentence, and come away.'

'Madame,' said the public prosecutor, 'Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré is not guilty either of robbery or of poisoning; but Monsieur Camusot has led him to confess a still greater crime.'

'What is that?' she asked.

'He acknowledged,' said Monsieur Camusot in her ear, 'that he is the friend and pupil of an escaped convict. The Abbé Carlos Herrera, the Spaniard with whom he has been living for the last seven years, is the notorious Jacques Collin.'

Madame de Sérizy felt as if it were a blow from an iron rod at each word spoken by the judge, but this name was the finishing stroke.

'And the upshot of all this?' she said, in a voice that was no more than a breath.

'Is,' Monsieur de Granville went on, finishing the Countess's sentence in an undertone, 'that the convict will be committed for trial, and that if Lucien is not

committed with him as having profited as an accesssory to the man's crimes, he must appear as a witness very seriously compromised.'

'Oh! never, never!' she cried aloud, with amazing firmness. 'For my part, I should not hesitate between death and the disaster of seeing a man whom the world has known to be my dearest friend declared by the bench to be the accomplice of a convict.—The King has a great regard for my husband——'

'Madame,' said the public prosecutor, also aloud, and with a smile, 'the King has not the smallest power over the humblest examining judge in his kingdom, nor over the proceedings in any court of justice. That is the grand feature of our new Code of laws. I myself have just congratulated M. Camusot on his skill——'

'On his clumsiness,' said the Countess sharply, though Lucien's intimacy with a scoundrel really disturbed her far less than his attachment to Esther.

'If you will read the minutes of the examination of the two prisoners by Monsieur Camusot, you will see that everything is in his hands——'

After this speech, the only thing the public prosecutor could venture to say, and a flash of feminine—or, if you will, lawyer-like—cunning, he went to the door; then, turning round on the threshold, he added—

'Excuse me, Madame; I have two words to say to Bauvan.' Which, translated by the worldly wise, conveyed to the Countess: 'I do not want to witness the scene between you and Camusot.'

'What is this examination business?' said Léontine very blandly to Camusot, who stood downcast in the presence of the wife of one of the most important personages in the realm.

'Madame,' said Camusot, 'a clerk writes down all the magistrate's questions and the prisoner's replies. This document is signed by the clerk, by the judge, and by the prisoner. This evidence is the raw material of the

subsequent proceedings; on it the accused are committed for trial, and remanded to appear before the Criminal Court.'

'Well, then,' said she, 'if the evidence were suppressed——?'

'Oh, Madame, that is a crime which no magistrate could possibly commit—a crime against society.'

'It is a far worse crime against me to have ever allowed it to be recorded; still, at this moment it is the only evidence against Lucien. Come, read me the minutes of his examination that I may see if there is still any way of salvation for us all, Monsieur. I do not speak for myself alone—I should quite calmly kill myself—but Monsieur de Sérizy's happiness is also at stake.'

'Pray, Madame, do not suppose that I have forgotten the respect due to you,' said Camusot. 'If Monsieur Popinot, for instance, had undertaken this case, you would have had worse luck than you have found with me; for he would not have come to consult Monsieur de Granville; no one would have heard anything about it. I tell you, Madame, everything has been seized in Monsieur Lucien's lodgings, even your letters——'

'What! my letters!'

'Here they are, Madame, in a sealed packet.'

The Countess in her agitation rang as if she had been at home, and the office-boy came in.

'A light,' said she.

The boy lighted a taper and placed it on the chimney-piece, while the Countess looked through the letters, counted them, crushed them in her hand, and flung them on the hearth. In a few minutes she set the whole mass in a blaze, twisting up the last note to serve as a torch.

Camusot stood, looking rather foolish as he watched the papers burn, holding the legal documents in his hand. The Countess, who seemed absorbed in the work of destroying the proofs of her passion, studied him out

of the corner of her eye. She took her time, she calculated her distance; with the spring of a cat she seized the two documents and threw them on the flames. But Camusot saved them; the Countess rushed on him and snatched back the burning papers. A struggle ensued, Camusot calling out: 'Madame, but Madame! This is contempt—Madame!'

A man hurried into the room, and the Countess could not repress a scream as she beheld the Comte de Sérizy, followed by Monsieur de Granville and the Comte de Bauvan. Léontine, however, determined to save Lucien at any cost, would not let go of the terrible stamped documents, which she clutched with the tenacity of a vice, though the flame had already burnt her delicate skin like a moxa.

At last Camusot, whose fingers also were smarting from the fire, seemed to be ashamed of the position; he let the papers go; there was nothing left of them but the portions so tightly held by the antagonists that the flame could not touch them. The whole scene had taken less time than is needed to read this account of it.

'What discussion can have arisen between you and Madame de Sérizy?' the husband asked of Camusot.

Before the lawyer could reply, the Countess held the fragments in the candle and threw them on the remains of her letters, which were not entirely consumed.

'I shall be compelled,' said Camusot, 'to lay a complaint against Madame la Comtesse——'

'Heh! What has she done?' asked the public prosecutor, looking alternately at the lady and the magistrate.

'I have burnt the record of the examinations,' said the lady of fashion with a laugh, so pleased at her high-handed conduct that she did not yet feel the pain of the burns. 'If that is a crime—well, Monsieur must get his odious scrawl written out again.'

'Very true,' said Camusot, trying to recover his dignity.

'Well, well, "All's well that ends well," said Mon-

sieur de Granville. 'But, my dear Countess, you must not often take such liberties with the Law; it might fail to discern who and what you are.'

'Monsieur Camusot valiantly resisted a woman whom none can resist; the Honour of the Robe is safe!' said the Comte de Bauvan, laughing.

'Indeed! Monsieur Camusot was resisting?' said the public prosecutor, laughing too. 'He is a brave man indeed; I should not dare resist the Countess.'

And thus for the moment this serious affair was no more than a pretty woman's jest, at which Camusot himself must laugh.

But Monsieur de Granville saw one man who was not amused. Not a little alarmed by the Comte de Sérizy's attitude and expression, his friend led him aside.

'My dear fellow,' said he in a whisper, 'your distress persuades me for the first and only time in my life to compromise with my duty.'

The public prosecutor rang, and the office boy appeared.

'Desire Monsieur de Chargebœuf to come here.'

Monsieur de Chargebœuf, a sucking barrister, was his private secretary.

'My good friend,' said the Comte de Granville to Camusot, whom he took to the window, 'go back to your chambers, get your clerk to reconstruct the report of the Abbé Carlos Herrera's depositions; as he had not signed the first copy, there will be no difficulty about that. To-morrow you must confront your Spanish diplomate with Rastignac and Bianchon, who will not recognise him as Jacques Collin. Then, being sure of his release, the man will sign the document.

'As to Lucien de Rubempré, set him free this evening; he is not likely to talk about an examination of which the evidence is destroyed, especially after such a lecture as I shall give him.

'Now you will see how little justice suffers by these

proceedings. If the Spaniard really is the convict, we have fifty ways of recapturing him and committing him for trial—for we will have his conduct in Spain thoroughly investigated. Corentin, the police agent, will take care of him for us, and we ourselves will keep an eye on him. So treat him decently; do not send him down to the cells again.

'Can we be the death of the Comte and Comtesse de Sérizy, as well as of Lucien, for the theft of seven hundred and fifty thousand francs as yet unproven, and to Lucien's personal loss? Will it not be better for him to lose the money than to lose his character? Above all, if he is to drag with him in his fall a Minister of State, and his wife, and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse.

'This young man is a speckled orange; do not leave it to rot.

'All this will take you about half an hour; go and get it done; we will wait for you. It is half-past three; you will still find some judges about. Let me know if you can get a rule of insufficient evidence—or Lucien must wait till to-morrow morning.'

Camusot bowed to the company and went; but Madame de Sérizy, who was suffering a good deal from her burns, did not return his bow.

Monsieur de Sérizy, who had suddenly rushed away while the public prosecutor and the magistrate were talking together, presently returned, having fetched a small jar of virgin wax. With this he dressed his wife's fingers, saying in an undertone—

'Léontine, why did you come here without letting me know?'

'My dear,' replied she in a whisper, 'forgive me. I seem mad, but indeed your interests were as much involved as mine.'

'Love this young fellow if fatality requires it, but do not display your passion to all the world,' said the luckless husband.

'Well, my dear Countess,' said Monsieur de Granville, who had been engaged in conversation with Comte Octave, 'I hope you may take Monsieur de Rubempré home to dine with you this evening.'

This half promise produced a reaction; Madame de Sérizy melted into tears.

'I thought I had no tears left,' said she with a smile. 'But could you not bring Monsieur de Rubempré to wait here?'

'I will try if I can find ushers to fetch him, so that he may not be seen under the escort of the gendarmes,' said Monsieur de Granville.

'You are as good as God!' cried she, with a gush of feeling that made her voice sound like heavenly music.

'These are the women,' said Comte Octave, 'who are fascinating, irresistible!'

And he became melancholy as he thought of his own wife. (See *Honorine*.)

As he left the room, Monsieur de Granville was stopped by young Chargebœuf, to whom he spoke to give him instructions as to what he was to say to Massol, one of the editors of the *Gazette des Tribunaux*.

While beauties, ministers, and magistrates were conspiring to save Lucien, this was what he was doing at the Conciergerie. As he passed the gate the poet told the keeper that Monsieur Camusot had granted him leave to write, and he begged to have pens, ink, and paper. At a whispered word to the Governor from Camusot's usher a warder was instructed to take them to him at once. During the short time that it took for the warder to fetch these things and carry them up to Lucien, the hapless young man, to whom the idea of facing Jacques Collin had become intolerable, sank into one of those fatal moods in which the idea of suicide—to which he had yielded before now, but without succeeding in carrying it out—rises to the pitch of mania. Accord-

ing to certain mad-doctors, suicide is in some temperaments the closing phase of mental aberration ; and since his arrest Lucien had been possessed by that single idea. Esther's letter, read and re-read many times, increased the vehemence of his desire to die by reminding him of the catastrophe of Romeo dying to be with Juliet.

This is what he wrote :—

'*This is my Last Will and Testament.*

'At the Conciergerie, *May* 15*th*, 1830.

'I, the undersigned, give and bequeath to the children of my sister, Madame Eve Chardon, wife of David Séchard, formerly a printer at Angoulême, and of Monsieur David Séchard, all the property, real and personal, of which I may be possessed at the time of my decease, due deduction being made for the payments and legacies, which I desire my executor to provide for.

'And I earnestly beg Monsieur de Sérizy to undertake the charge of being the executor of this my will.

'First, to Monsieur l'Abbé Carlos Herrera I direct the payment of the sum of three hundred thousand francs. Secondly, to Monsieur le Baron de Nucingen the sum of fourteen hundred thousand francs, less seven hundred and fifty-thousand francs if the sum stolen from Mademoiselle Esther should be recovered.

'As universal legatee to Mademoiselle Esther Gobseck, I give and bequeath the sum of seven hundred and sixty thousand francs to the Board of Asylums of Paris for the foundation of a refuge especially dedicated to the use of public prostitutes who may wish to forsake their life of vice and ruin.

'I also bequeath to the Asylums of Paris the sum of money necessary for the purchase of a certificate for dividends to the amount of thirty thousand francs per annum in five per cents, the annual income to be devoted every six months to the release of prisoners for

debts not exceeding two thousand francs. The Board of Asylums to select the most respectable of such persons imprisoned for debt.

'I beg Monsieur de Sérizy to devote the sum of forty thousand francs to erecting a monument to Mademoiselle Esther in the Eastern cemetery, and I desire to be buried by her side. The tomb is to be like an antique tomb—square, our two effigies lying thereon, in white marble, the heads on pillows, the hands folded and raised to heaven. There is to be no inscription whatever.

'I beg Monsieur de Sérizy to give to Monsieur de Rastignac a gold toilet-set that is in my room as a remembrance.

'And as a remembrance, I beg my executor to accept my library of books as a gift from me.

'LUCIEN CHARDON DE RUBEMPRÉ.'

This Will was enclosed in a letter addressed to Monsieur Le Comte de Granville, Public Prosecutor in the Supreme Court at Paris, as follows:—

'MONSIEUR LE COMTE,—

'I place my Will in your hands. When you open this letter I shall be no more. In my desire to be free, I made such cowardly replies to Monsieur Camusot's insidious questions, that, in spite of my innocence, I may find myself entangled in a disgraceful trial. Even if I were acquitted, a blameless life would henceforth be impossible to me in view of the opinions of the world.

'I beg you to transmit the enclosed letter to the Abbé Carlos Herrera without opening it, and deliver to Monsieur Camusot the formal retractation I also enclose.

'I suppose no one will dare to break the seal of a packet addressed to you. In this belief I bid you adieu, offering you my best respects for the last time, and begging you to believe that in writing to you I am giving

you a token of my gratitude for all the kindness you have shown to your deceased humble servant,

'Lucien de R.'

' *To the Abbé Carlos Herrera.*

'My dear Abbé,—I have had only benefits from you, and I have betrayed you. This involuntary ingratitude is killing me, and when you read these lines I shall have ceased to exist. You are not here now to save me.

'You had given me full liberty, if I should find it advantageous, to destroy you by flinging you on the ground like a cigar-end; but I have ruined you by a blunder. To escape from a difficulty, deluded by a clever question from the examining judge, your son by adoption and grace went over to the side of those who aim at killing you at any cost, and insist on proving an identity, which I know to be impossible, between you and a French villain. All is said.

'Between a man of your calibre and me—me of whom you tried to make a greater man than I am capable of being—no foolish sentiment can come at the moment of final parting. You hoped to make me powerful and famous, and you have thrown me into the gulf of suicide, that is all. I have long heard the broad pinions of that vertigo beating over my head.

'As you have sometimes said, there is the posterity of Cain and the posterity of Abel. In the great human drama Cain is in opposition. You are descended from Adam through that line, in which the devil still fans the fire of which the first spark was flung on Eve. Among the demons of that pedigree, from time to time we see one of stupendous power, summing up every form of human energy, and resembling the fevered beasts of the desert, whose vitality demands the vast spaces they find there. Such men are as dangerous as lions would be in the heart of Normandy; they must have their prey, and

they devour common men and crop the money of fools. Their sport is so dangerous that at last they kill the humble dog whom they have taken for a companion and made an idol of.

'When it is God's will, these mysterious beings may be a Moses, an Attila, Charlemagne, Mahomet, or Napoleon; but when He leaves a generation of these stupendous tools to rust at the bottom of the ocean, they are no more than a Pugatschef, a Fouché, a Louvel, or the Abbé Carlos Herrera. Gifted with immense power over tenderer souls, they entrap them and mangle them. It is grand, it is fine—in its way. It is the poisonous plant with gorgeous colouring that fascinates children in the woods. It is the poetry of evil. Men like you ought to dwell in caves and never come out of them. You have made me live that vast life, and I have had all my share of existence; so I may very well take my head out of the Gordian knot of your policy and slip it into the running knot of my cravat.

'To repair the mischief I have done, I am forwarding to the public prosecutor a retractation of my deposition. You will know how to take advantage of this document.

'In virtue of a will formally drawn up, restitution will be made, Monsieur l'Abbé, of the moneys belonging to your Order which you so imprudently devoted to my use, as a result of your paternal affection for me.

'And so, farewell. Farewell, colossal image of Evil and Corruption; farewell—to you who, if started on the right road, might have been greater than Ximenes, greater than Richelieu! You have kept your promises. I find myself once more just as I was on the banks of the Charente, after enjoying, by your help, the enchantments of a dream. But, unfortunately, it is not now in the waters of my native place that I shall drown the errors of a boy; but in the Seine, and my hole is a cell in the Conciergerie.

'Do not regret me: my contempt for you is as great as my admiration.

'LUCIEN.'

'*Recantation.*

'I, the undersigned, hereby declare that I retract, without reservation, all that I deposed at my examination to-day before Monsieur Camusot.

'The Abbé Carlos Herrera always called himself my spiritual father, and I was misled by the word father used in another sense by the judge, no doubt under a misapprehension.

'I am aware that, for political ends, and to quash certain secrets concerning the Cabinets of Spain and of the Tuileries, some obscure diplomatic agents tried to show that the Abbé Carlos Herrera was a forger named Jacques Collin; but the Abbé Carlos Herrera never told me anything about the matter excepting that he was doing his best to obtain evidence of the death or of the continued existence of Jacques Collin.

'LUCIEN DE RUBEMPRÉ.

'AT THE CONCIERGERIE, *May* 15, 1830.'

The fever for suicide had given Lucien immense clearness of mind, and the swiftness of hand familiar to authors in the fever of composition. The impetus was so strong within him that these four documents were all written within half an hour; he folded them in a wrapper, fastened with wafers, on which he impressed with the strength of delirium the coat-of-arms engraved on a seal-ring he wore, and he then laid the packet very conspicuously in the middle of the floor.

Certainly it would have been impossible to conduct himself with greater dignity, in the false position to which all this infamy had led him; he was rescuing his memory from opprobrium, and repairing the injury

done to his accomplice, so far as the wit of a man of the world could nullify the results of the poet's trustfulness.

If Lucien had been taken back to one of the lower cells, he would have been wrecked on the impossibility of carrying out his intentions, for those boxes of masonry have no furniture but a sort of camp-bed and a pail for necessary uses. There is not a nail, not a chair, not even a stool. The camp-bed is so firmly fixed that it is impossible to move it without an amount of labour that the warder could not fail to detect, for the iron-barred peephole is always open. Indeed, if a prisoner under suspicion gave reason for uneasiness, he is watched by a gendarme or a constable.

In the private rooms for which prisoners pay, and in that whither Lucien had been conveyed by the judge's courtesy to a young man belonging to the upper ranks of society, the movable bed, table, and chair might serve to carry out his purpose of suicide, though they hardly made it easy. Lucien wore a long blue silk necktie, and on his way back from his examination he was already meditating on the means by which Pichegru, more or less voluntarily, ended his days. Still, to hang himself, a man must find a purchase, and have a sufficient space between it and the ground for his feet to find no support. Now the window of his room, looking out on the prison-yard, had no handle to the fastening; and the bars, being fixed outside, were divided from his reach by the thickness of the wall, and could not be used for a support.

This, then, was the plan hit upon by Lucien to put himself out of the world. The boarding of the lower part of the opening, which prevented his seeing out into the yard, also hindered the warders outside from seeing what was done in the room; but while the lower portion of the window was replaced by two thick planks, the upper part of both halves still was filled with small panes, held in place by the cross pieces in which they

were set. By standing on his table Lucien could reach the glazed part of the window, and take or break out two panes, so as to have a firm point of attachment in the angle of the lower bar. Round this he would tie his cravat, turn round once to tighten it round his neck after securing it firmly, and kick the table from under his feet.

He drew the table up under the window without making any noise, took off his coat and waistcoat, and got on the table unhesitatingly to break a pane above and one below the iron cross-bar. Standing on the table, he could look out across the yard on a magical view, which he then beheld for the first time. The Governor of the prison, in deference to Monsieur Camusot's request that he should deal as leniently as possible with Lucien, had led him, as we have seen, through the back passages of the Conciergerie, entered from the dark vault opposite the Tour d'Argent, thus avoiding the exhibition of a young man of fashion to the crowd of prisoners airing themselves in the yard. It will be for the reader to judge whether the aspect of this promenade was not such as to appeal deeply to a poet's soul.

The yard of the Conciergerie ends at the quai between the Tour d'Argent and the Tour Bonbec ; thus the distance between them exactly shows from the outside the width of the plot of ground. The corridor called the Galerie de Saint-Louis, which extends from the Galerie Marchande to the Court of Appeals and the Tour Bonbec—in which, it is said, Saint-Louis' room still exists—may enable the curious to estimate the depth of the yard, as it is of the same length. Thus the dark cells and the private rooms are under the Galerie Marchande. And Queen Marie Antoinette, whose dungeon was under the present cells, was conducted to the presence of the Revolutionary Tribunal, which held its sittings in the place where the Court of Appeals now performs its solemn functions, up a horrible flight of

steps, now never used, in the very thickness of the wall on which the Galerie Marchande is built.

One side of the prison-yard—that on which the Hall of Saint-Louis forms the first floor—displays a long row of Gothic columns, between which the architects of I know not what period have built up two floors of cells to accommodate as many prisoners as possible, by choking the capitals, the arches, and the vaults of this magnificent cloister with plaster, barred loopholes, and partitions. Under the room known as the Cabinet de Saint-Louis, in the Tour Bonbec, there is a spiral stair leading to these dens. This degradation of one of the immemorial buildings of France is hideous to behold.

From the height at which Lucien was standing he saw this cloister, and the details of the building that joins the two towers, in sharp perspective; before him were the pointed caps of the towers. He stood amazed; his suicide was postponed to his admiration. The phenomena of hallucination are in these days so fully recognised by the medical faculty that this mirage of the senses, this strange illusion of the mind is beyond dispute. A man under the stress of a feeling which by its intensity has become monomania, often finds himself in the frame of mind to which opium, hasheesh, or the protoxyde of azote might have brought him. Spectres appear, phantoms and dreams take shape, things of the past live again as once they were. What was but an image of the brain becomes a moving or a living object. Science is now beginning to believe that under the action of a paroxysm of passion the blood rushes to the brain, and that such congestion has the terrible effects of a dream in a waking state, so averse are we to regard thought as a physical and generative force. (See *Louis Lambert.*)

Lucien saw the building in all its pristine beauty; the columns were new, slender and bright; Saint-Louis' Palace rose before him as it had once appeared; he

admired its Babylonian proportions and Oriental fancy. He took this exquisite vision as a poetic farewell from civilised creation. While making his arrangements to die, he wondered how this marvel of architecture could exist in Paris so utterly unknown. He was two Luciens —one Lucien the poet, wandering through the Middle Ages under the vaults and the turrets of Saint-Louis, the other Lucien ready for suicide.

Just as Monsieur de Granville had ended giving his instructions to the young secretary, the Governor of the Conciergerie came in, and the expression of his face was such as to give the public prosecutor a presentiment of disaster.

'Have you met Monsieur Camusot?' he asked.

'No, Monsieur,' said the Governor; 'his clerk Coquart instructed me to give the Abbé Carlos a private room and to liberate Monsieur de Rubempré—but it is too late.'

'Good God! what has happened?'

'Here, Monsieur, is a letter for you which will explain the catastrophe. The warder on duty in the prison-yard heard a noise of breaking glass in the upper room, and Monsieur Lucien's next neighbour shrieking wildly, for he heard the poor young man's dying struggles. The warder came to me pale from the sight that met his eyes. He found the prisoner hanged from the window bar by his necktie.'

Though the Governor spoke in a low voice, a fearful scream from Madame de Sérizy showed that under stress of feeling our faculties are incalculably keen. The Countess heard, or guessed. Before Monsieur de Granville could turn round, or Monsieur de Bauvan or her husband could stop her, she fled like a flash out of the door, and reached the Galerie Marchande, where she ran on to the stairs leading out to the Rüe de la Barillerie.

A pleader was taking off his gown at the door of one

of the shops which from time immemorial have choked up this arcade, where shoes are sold, and gowns and caps kept for hire.

The Countess asked the way to the Conciergerie.

'Go down the steps and turn to the left. The entrance is from the Quai de l'Horloge, the first archway.'

'That woman is crazy,' said the shop-woman; 'some one ought to follow her.'

But no one could have kept up with Léontine; she flew.

A physician may explain how it is that these ladies of fashion, whose strength never finds employment, reveal such powers in the critical moments of life.

The Countess rushed so swiftly through the archway to the wicket-gate that the gendarme on sentry did not see her pass. She flew at the barred gate like a feather driven by the wind, and shook the iron bars with such fury that she broke the one she grasped. The bent ends were thrust into her breast, making the blood flow, and she dropped on the ground, shrieking, 'Open it, open it!' in a tone that struck terror into the warders.

The gatekeepers hurried out.

'Open the gate—the public prosecutor sent me—to save the dead man!——'

While the Countess was going round by the Rue de la Barillerie and the Quai de l'Horloge, Monsieur de Granville and Monsieur de Sérizy went down to the Conciergerie through the inner passages, suspecting Léontine's purpose; but notwithstanding their haste, they only arrived in time to see her fall fainting at the outer gate, where she was picked up by two gendarmes who had come down from the guard-room.

On seeing the Governor of the prison, the gate was opened, and the Countess was carried into the office, but she stood up and fell on her knees, clasping her hands.

'Only to see him—to see him! Oh! I will do no

wrong! But if you do not want to see me die on the spot, let me look at Lucien dead or living.—Ah, my dear, are you here? Choose between my death and——'

She sank in a heap.

'You are kind,' she said; 'I will always love you——'

'Carry her away,' said Monsieur de Bauvan.

'No, we will go to Lucien's cell,' said Monsieur de Granville, reading a purpose in Monsieur de Sérizy's wild looks.

And he lifted up the Countess, and took her under one arm, while Monsieur de Bauvan supported her on the other side.

'Monsieur,' said the Comte de Sérizy to the Governor, 'silence as of the grave about all this.'

'Be easy,' replied the Governor; 'you have done the wisest thing.—If this lady——'

'She is my wife.'

'Oh! I beg your pardon. Well, she will certainly faint away when she sees the poor man, and while she is unconscious she can be taken home in a carriage.'

'That is what I thought,' replied the Count. 'Pray send one of your men to tell my servants in the Cour de Harlay to come round to the gate. Mine is the only carriage there.'

'We can save him yet,' said the Countess, walking on with a degree of strength and spirit that surprised her friends. 'There are ways of restoring life——'

And she dragged the gentlemen along, crying to the warder—

'Come on, come faster—one second may cost three lives!'

When the cell door was opened, and the Countess saw Lucien hanging as though his clothes had been hung on a peg, she made a spring towards him as if to embrace him and cling to him; but she fell on her face on the floor with smothered shrieks and a sort of rattle in her throat.

Five minutes later she was being taken home stretched on the seat in the Count's carriage, her husband kneeling by her side. Monsieur de Bauvan went off to fetch a doctor to give her the care she needed.

The Governor of the Conciergerie meanwhile was examining the outer gate, and saying to his clerk—

'No expense was spared; the bars are of wrought iron, they were properly tested, and cost a large sum; and yet there was a flaw in that bar.'

Monsieur de Granville on returning to his room had other instructions to give to his private secretary. Massol, happily, had not yet arrived.

Soon after Monsieur de Granville had left, anxious to go to see Monsieur de Sérizy, Massol came and found his ally Chargebœuf in the public prosecutor's Court.

'My dear fellow,' said the young secretary, 'if you will do me a great favour, you will put what I will dictate to you in your *Gazette* to-morrow under the heading of Law Reports; you can compose the heading. Write now.'

And he dictated as follows:—

'It has been ascertained that the Demoiselle Esther Gobseck killed herself of her own free will.

'Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré satisfactorily proved an *alibi*, and his innocence leaves his arrest to be regretted, all the more because just as the examining judge had given the order for his release the young gentleman died suddenly.'

'I need not point out to you,' said the young lawyer to Massol, 'how necessary it is to preserve absolute silence as to the little service requested of you.'

'Since it is you who do me the honour of so much confidence,' replied Massol,' allow me to make one observation. This paragraph will give rise to odious comments on the course of justice——'

'Justice is strong enough to bear them,' said the young attaché to the Courts, with the pride of a coming magistrate trained by Monsieur de Granville.

'Allow me, my dear sir; with two sentences this difficulty may be avoided.'

And the journalist-lawyer wrote as follows:—

'The forms of the law have nothing to do with this sad event. The *post-mortem* examination, which was at once made, proved that sudden death was due to the rupture of an aneurism in its last stage. If Monsieur Lucien de Rubempré had been upset by his arrest, death must have ensued sooner. But we are in a position to state that, far from being distressed at being taken into custody, the young man, whom all must lament, only laughed at it, and told those who escorted him from Fontainebleau to Paris that as soon as he was brought before a magistrate his innocence would be acknowledged.'

'That saves it, I think?' said Massol.

'You are perfectly right.'

'The public prosecutor will thank you for it to-morrow,' said Massol slily.

Now to the great majority, as to the more choice reader, it will seem perhaps that this Study is not completed by the death of Esther and of Lucien; Jacques Collin and Asie, Europe and Paccard, in spite of their villainous lives, may have been interesting enough to make their fate a matter of curiosity.

The last act of the drama will also complete the picture of life which this Study is intended to present, and give the issue of various interests which Lucien's career had strangely tangled by bringing some ignoble personages from the hulks into contact with those of the highest rank.

Thus, as may be seen, the greatest events of life find their expression in the more or less veracious gossip of the Paris papers. And this is the case with many things of greater importance than are here recorded.

VAUTRIN'S LAST AVATAR

'What is it, Madeleine?' asked Madame Camusot, seeing her maid come into the room with the particular air that servants assume in critical moments.

'Madame,' said Madeleine, 'Monsieur has just come in from Court; but he looks so upset, and is in such a state, that I think perhaps it would be well for you to go to his room.'

'Did he say anything?' asked Madame Camusot.

'No, Madame; but we never have seen Monsieur look like that; he looks as if he were going to be ill, his face is yellow—he seems all to pieces——'

Madame Camusot waited for no more; she rushed out of her room and flew to her husband's study. She found the lawyer sitting in an armchair, pale and dazed, his legs stretched out, his head against the back of it, his hands hanging limp, exactly as if he were sinking into idiotcy.

'What is the matter, my dear?' said the young woman in alarm.

'Oh! my poor Amélie, the most dreadful thing has happened—I am still trembling. Imagine, the public prosecutor—no, Madame de Sérizy—that is—I do not know where to begin.'

'Begin at the end,' said Madame Camusot.

'Well, just as Monsieur Popinot, in the council room of the first Court, had put the last signature to the ruling of "insufficient cause" for the apprehension of Lucien de Rubempré, on the ground of my report, setting him at liberty—in fact, the whole thing was done, the clerk

was going off with the minute book, and I was quit of the whole business—the President of the Court came in and took up the papers. "You are releasing a dead man," said he, with chilly irony; "the young man is gone, as Monsieur de Bonald says, to appear before his natural Judge. He died of apoplexy——"

'I breathed again, thinking it was sudden illness.

'"As I understand you, Monsieur le Président," said Monsieur Popinot, "it is a case of apoplexy like Pichegru's."

'"Gentlemen," said the President then, very gravely, "you must please to understand that for the outside world Lucien de Rubempré died of an aneurism."

'We all looked at each other. "Very great people are concerned in this deplorable business," said the President. "God grant for your sake, Monsieur Camusot, though you did no less than your duty, that Madame de Sérizy may not go mad from the shock she has had. She was carried away almost dead. I have just met our public prosecutor in a painful state of despair."—"You have made a mess of it, my dear Camusot," he added in my ear.—I assure you, my dear, as I came away I could hardly stand. My legs shook so that I dared not venture into the street. I went back to my room to rest. Then Coquart, who was putting away the papers of this wretched case, told me that a very handsome woman had taken the Conciergerie by storm, wanting to save Lucien, whom she was quite crazy about, and that she fainted away on seeing him hanging by his necktie to the window-bar of his room. The idea that the way in which I questioned that unhappy young fellow—who, between ourselves, was guilty in many ways—can have led to his committing suicide has haunted me ever since I left the Palais, and I feel constantly on the point of fainting——'

'What next? Are you going to think yourself a murderer because a suspected criminal hangs himself in

prison just as you were about to release him?' cried Madame Camusot. 'Why, an examining judge in such a case is like a general whose horse is killed under him! —That is all.'

'Such a comparison, my dear, is at best but a jest, and jesting is out of place now. In this case the dead man clutches the living. All our hopes are buried in Lucien's coffin.'

'Indeed?' said Madame Camusot, with deep irony.

'Yes, my career is closed. I shall be no more than an examining judge all my life. Before this fatal termination Monsieur de Granville was annoyed at the turn the preliminaries had taken; his speech to our President makes me quite certain that so long as Monsieur de Granville is public prosecutor I shall get no promotion.'

Promotion! The terrible thought, which in these days makes a judge a mere functionary.

Formerly a magistrate was made at once what he was to remain. The three or four presidents' caps satisfied the ambitions of lawyers in each *Parlement*. An appointment as councillor was enough for a de Brosses or a Molé, at Dijon as much as in Paris. This office, in itself a fortune, required a fortune brought to it to keep it up.

In Paris, outside the *Parlement*, men of the long robe could hope only for three supreme appointments: those of Controller-General, Keeper of the Seals, or Chancellor. Below the *Parlements*, in the lower grades, the president of a lower Court thought himself quite of sufficient importance to be content to fill his chair to the end of his days.

Compare the position of a councillor in the High Court of Justice in Paris, in 1829, who has nothing but his salary, with that of a councillor to the *Parlement* in 1729. How great is the difference! In these days, when money is the universal social guarantee, magistrates

are not required to have—as they used to have—fine private fortunes: hence we see deputies and peers of France heaping office on office, at once magistrates and legislators, borrowing dignity from other positions than those which ought to give them all their importance.

In short, a magistrate tries to distinguish himself for promotion as men do in the army, or in a Government office.

This prevailing thought, even if it does not affect his independence, is so well known and so natural, and its effects are so evident, that the law inevitably loses some of its majesty in the eyes of the public. And, in fact, the salaries paid by the State make priests and magistrates mere *employés*. Steps to be gained foster ambition, ambition engenders subservience to power, and modern equality places the judge and the person to be judged in the same category at the bar of society. And so the two pillars of social order, Religion and Justice, are lowered in this nineteenth century, which asserts itself as progressive in all things.

'And why should you never be promoted?' said Amélie Camusot.

She looked half-jestingly at her husband, feeling the necessity of reviving the energies of the man who embodied her ambitions, and on whom she could play as on an instrument.

'Why despair?' she went on, with a shrug that sufficiently expressed her indifference as to the prisoner's end. 'This suicide will delight Lucien's two enemies, Madame d'Espard and her cousin, the Comtesse du Châtelet. Madame d'Espard is on the best terms with the Keeper of the Seals; through her you can get an audience of His Excellency and tell him all the secrets of this business. Then, if the head of the law is on your side, what have you to fear from the president of your Court or the public prosecutor?'

'But Monsieur and Madame de Sérizy?' cried the poor man. 'Madame de Sérizy is gone mad, I tell you, and her madness is my doing, they say.'

'Well, if she is out of her mind, O judge devoid of judgment,' said Madame Camusot, laughing, 'she can do you no harm.—Come, tell me all the incidents of the day.'

'Bless me!' said Camusot, 'just as I had cross-questioned the unhappy youth, and he had deposed that the self-styled Spanish priest is really Jacques Collin, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and Madame de Sérizy sent me a note by a servant begging me not to examine him. It was all over!——'

'But you must have lost your head!' said Amélie. 'What was to prevent you, being so sure as you are of your clerk's fidelity, from calling Lucien back, reassuring him cleverly, and revising the examination?'

'Why, you are as bad as Madame de Sérizy; you laugh justice to scorn,' said Camusot, who was incapable of flouting his profession. 'Madame de Sérizy seized the minutes and threw them into the fire.'

'That is the right sort of woman! Bravo!' cried Madame Camusot.

'Madame de Sérizy declared she would sooner see the Palais blown up than leave a young man who had enjoyed the favours of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and her own to stand at the bar of a Criminal Court by the side of a convict!'

'But, Camusot,' said Amélie, unable to suppress a superior smile, 'your position is splendid——'

'Ah! yes, splendid!'

'You did your duty.'

'But all wrong; and in spite of the jesuitical advice of Monsieur de Granville, who met me on the Quai Malaquais.'

'This morning!'

'This morning.'

'At what hour?'

'At nine o'clock.'

'Oh Camusot!' cried Amélie, clasping and wringing her hands, 'and I am always imploring you to be constantly on the alert.—Good heavens! it is not a man, but a barrow-load of stones that I have to drag on!—Why, Camusot, your public prosecutor was waiting for you.—He must have given you some warning.'

'Yes indeed——'

'And you failed to understand him! If you are so deaf, you will indeed be an examining judge all your life without any knowledge whatever of the question.—At any rate, have sense enough to listen to me,' she went on, silencing her husband, who was about to speak. 'You think the matter is done for?' she asked.

Camusot looked at his wife as a country bumpkin looks at a conjurer.

'If the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and Madame de Sérizy are compromised, you will find them both ready to patronise you,' said Amélie. 'Madame de Sérizy will get you admission to the Keeper of the Seals, and you will tell him the secret history of the affair; then he will amuse the King with the story, for sovereigns always wish to see the wrong side of the tapestry and to know the real meaning of the events the public stare at open-mouthed. Henceforth there will be no cause to fear either the public prosecutor or Monsieur de Sérizy.'

'What a treasure such a wife is!' cried the lawyer, plucking up courage. 'After all, I have unearthed Jacques Collin; I shall send him to his account at the Assize Court and unmask his crimes. Such a trial is a triumph in the career of an examining judge!'

'Camusot,' Amélie began, pleased to see her husband rally from the moral and physical prostration into which he had been thrown by Lucien's suicide, 'the President told you that you had blundered to the wrong side. Now you are blundering as much to the other—you are losing your way again, my dear.'

The magistrate stood up, looking at his wife with a stupid stare.

'The King and the Keeper of the Seals will be glad, no doubt, to know the truth of this business, and at the same time much annoyed at seeing the lawyers on the Liberal side dragging important persons to the bar of opinion and of the Assize Court by their special pleading —such people as the Maufrigneuses, the Sérizys, and the Grandlieus, in short, all who are directly or indirectly mixed up with this case.'

'They are all in it; I have them all!' cried Camusot.

And Camusot walked up and down the room like Sganarelle on the stage when he is trying to get out of a scrape.

'Listen, Amélie,' said he, standing in front of his wife. 'An incident recurs to my mind, a trifle in itself, but, in my position, of vital importance.

'Realise, my dear, that this Jacques Collin is a giant of cunning, of dissimulation, of deceit.—He is—what shall I say?—the Cromwell of the hulks!—I never met such a scoundrel; he almost took me in.—But in examining a criminal, a little end of thread leads you to find a ball, is a clue to the investigation of the darkest consciences and obscurest facts.—When Jacques Collin saw me turning over the letters seized in Lucien de Rubempré's lodgings, the villain glanced at them with the evident intention of seeing whether some particular packet were among them, and he allowed himself to give a visible expression of satisfaction. This look, as of a thief valuing his booty, this movement, as of a man in danger saying to himself, "My weapons are safe," betrayed a world of things.

'Only you women, besides us and our examinees, can in a single flash epitomise a whole scene, revealing trickery as complicated as safety-locks. Volumes of suspicion may thus be communicated in a second. It is terrifying—life or death lies in a wink.

'Said I to myself, "The rascal has more letters in his hands than these!"—Then the other details of the case filled my mind; I overlooked the incident, for I thought I should have my men face to face, and clear up this point afterwards. But it may be considered as quite certain that Jacques Collin, after the fashion of such wretches, has hidden in some safe place the most compromising of the young fellow's letters, adored as he was by——'

'And yet you are afraid, Camusot? Why, you will be President of the Supreme Court much sooner than I expected!' cried Madame Camusot, her face beaming. 'Now, then, you must proceed so as to give satisfaction to everybody, for the matter is looking so serious that it might quite possibly be snatched from us.—Did they not take the proceedings out of Popinot's hands to place them in yours when Madame d'Espard tried to get a Commission in Lunacy to incapacitate her husband?' she added, in reply to her husband's gesture of astonishment. 'Well, then, might not the public prosecutor, who takes such keen interest in the honour of Monsieur and Madame de Sérizy, carry the case to the Upper Court and get a councillor in his interest to open a fresh inquiry?'

'Bless me, my dear, where did you study criminal law?' cried Camusot. 'You know everything; you can give me points.'

'Why, do you believe that, by to-morrow morning, Monsieur de Granville will not have taken fright at the possible line of defence that might be adopted by some liberal advocate whom Jacques Collin would manage to secure; for lawyers will be ready to pay him to place the case in their hands!—And those ladies know their danger quite as well as you do—not to say better; they will put themselves under the protection of the public prosecutor, who already sees their families unpleasantly close to the prisoner's bench, as a consequence of the

coalition between this convict and Lucien de Rubempré, betrothed to Mademoiselle de Grandlieu — Lucien, Esther's lover, Madame de Maufrigneuse's former lover, Madame de Sérizy's darling. So you must conduct the affair in such a way as to conciliate the favour of your public prosecutor, the gratitude of Monsieur de Sérizy, and that of the Marquise d'Espard and the Comtesse du Châtelet, to reinforce Madame de Maufrigneuse's influence by that of the Grandlieus, and to gain the complimentary approval of your President.

'I will undertake to deal with the ladies—d'Espard, de Maufrigneuse, and de Grandlieu.

'You must go to-morrow morning to see the public prosecutor. Monsieur de Granville is a man who does not live with his wife; for ten years he had for his mistress a Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille, who bore him illegitimate children—didn't she? Well, such a magistrate is no saint; he is a man like any other; he can be won over; he must give a hold somewhere; you must discover the weak spot and flatter him; ask his advice, point out the dangers attending the case; in short, try to get him into the same boat, and you will be——'

'I ought to kiss your footprints!' exclaimed Camusot, interrupting his wife, putting his arm round her, and pressing her to his heart. 'Amélie, you have saved me!'

'I brought you in tow from Alençon to Mantes, and from Mantes to the Metropolitan Court,' replied Amélie. 'Well, well, be quite easy!—I intend to be called Madame la Présidente within five years' time. But, my dear, pray always think over everything a long time before you come to any determination. A judge's business is not that of a fireman; your papers are never in a blaze, you have plenty of time to think; so in your place blunders are inexcusable.'

'The whole strength of my position lies in identifying the sham Spanish priest with Jacques Collin,' the judge said, after a long pause. 'When once that identity is

established, even if the Bench should take the credit of the whole affair, that will still be an ascertained fact which no magistrate, judge, or councillor can get rid of. I shall do like the boys who tie a tin kettle to a cat's tail; the inquiry, whoever carries it on, will make Jacques Collin's tin kettle clank.'

'Bravo!' said Amélie.

'And the public prosecutor would rather come to an understanding with me than with any one else, since I am the only man who can remove the Damocles' sword that hangs over the heart of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

'Only, you have no idea how hard it will be to achieve that magnificent result. Just now, when I was with Monsieur de Granville in his private office, we agreed, he and I, to take Jacques Collin at his own valuation—a canon of the Chapter of Toledo, Carlos Herrera. We consented to recognise his position as a diplomatic envoy, and allow him to be claimed by the Spanish embassy. It was in consequence of this plan that I made out the papers by which Lucien de Rubempré was released, and revised the minutes of the examinations, washing the prisoners as white as snow.

'To-morrow, Rastignac, Bianchon, and some others are to be confronted with the self-styled Canon of Toledo; they will not recognise him as Jacques Collin who was arrested in their presence ten years since in a cheap boarding-house, where they knew him under the name of Vautrin.'

There was a short silence, while Madame Camusot sat thinking.

'Are you sure your man is Jacques Collin?' she asked.

'Positive,' said the lawyer, 'and so is the public prosecutor.'

'Well, then, try to make some exposure at the Palais de Justice without showing your claws too much under your furred cat's paws. If your man is still in the secret

cells, go straight to the Governor of the Conciergerie and contrive to have the convict publicly identified. Instead of behaving like a child, act like the ministers of police under despotic governments, who invent conspiracies against the monarch to have the credit of discovering them and making themselves indispensable. Put three families in danger to have the glory of rescuing them.'

'That luckily reminds me!' cried Camusot. 'My brain is so bewildered that I had quite forgotten an important point. The instructions to place Jacques Collin in a private room were taken by Coquart to Monsieur Gault, the Governor of the prison. Now, Bibi-Lupin, Jacques Collin's great enemy, has taken steps to have three criminals, who know the man, transferred from La Force to the Conciergerie; if he appears in the prison-yard to-morrow, a terrific scene is expected——'

'Why?'

'Jacques Collin, my dear, was treasurer of the money owned by the prisoners in the hulks, amounting to considerable sums; now he is supposed to have spent it all to maintain the deceased Lucien in luxury, and he will be called to account. There will be such a battle, Bibi-Lupin tells me, as will require the intervention of the warders, and the secret will be out. Jacques Collin's life is in danger.

'Now, if I get to the Palais early enough I may record the evidence of identity.'

'Oh, if only his creditors should take him off your hands! You would be thought such a clever fellow! —Do not go to Monsieur de Granville's room; wait for him in his Court with that formidable great gun. It is a loaded cannon turned on the three most important families of the Court and Peerage. Be bold: propose to Monsieur de Granville that he should relieve you of Jacques Collin by transferring him to La Force, where the convicts know how to deal with those who betray them.

'I will go to the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, who will take me to the Grandlieus. Possibly I may see Monsieur de Sérizy. Trust me to sound the alarm everywhere. Above all, send me a word we will agree upon to let me know if the Spanish priest is officially recognised as Jacques Collin. Get your business at the Palais over by two o'clock, and I will have arranged for you to have an interview with the Keeper of the Seals; perhaps I may find him with the Marquise d'Espard.'

Camusot stood squarely with a look of admiration that made his knowing wife smile.

'Now, come to dinner and be cheerful,' said she in conclusion. 'Why, you see! We have been only two years in Paris, and here you are on the high road to be made Councillor before the end of the year. From that to the Presidency of a Court, my dear, there is no gulf but what some political service may bridge.'

This conjugal sitting shows how greatly the deeds and the lightest words of Jacques Collin, the lowest personage in this drama, involved the honour of the families among whom he had planted his now dead protégé.

At the Conciergerie Lucien's death and Madame de Sérizy's incursion had produced such a block in the wheels of the machinery that the Governor had forgotten to remove the sham priest from his dungeon-cell.

Though more than one instance is on record of the death of a prisoner during his preliminary examination, it was a sufficiently rare event to disturb the warders, the clerk, and the Governor, and hinder their working with their usual serenity. At the same time, to them the important fact was not the handsome young fellow so suddenly become a corpse, but the breakage of the wrought-iron bar of the outer prison gate by the frail hands of a fine lady. And indeed, as soon as the public prosecutor and Comte Octave de Bauvan had gone off with Monsieur de Sérizy and his unconscious wife, the

Governor, clerk, and turnkeys gathered round the gate, after letting out Monsieur Lebrun, the prison doctor, who had been called in to certify to Lucien's death, in concert with the 'death doctor' of the district in which the unfortunate youth had been lodging.

In Paris, the 'death doctor' is the medical officer whose duty it is in each district to register deaths and certify to their causes.

With the rapid insight for which he was known, Monsieur de Granville had judged it necessary, for the honour of the families concerned, to have the certificate of Lucien's death deposited at the Mairie of the district in which the Quai Malaquais lies, as the deceased had resided there, and to have the body carried from his lodgings to the Church of Saint-Germain des Prés, where the service was to be held. Monsieur de Chargebœuf, Monsieur de Granville's private secretary, had orders to this effect. The body was to be transferred from the prison during the night. The secretary was desired to go at once and settle matters at the Mairie with the parish authorities and with the official undertakers. Thus, to the world in general, Lucien would have died at liberty in his own lodgings, the funeral would start from thence, and his friends would be invited there for the ceremony.

So, when Camusot, his mind at ease, was sitting down to dinner with his ambitious better-half, the Governor of the Conciergerie and Monsieur Lebrun, the prison doctor, were standing outside the gate bewailing the fragility of iron bars and the strength of ladies in love.

'No one knows,' said the doctor to Monsieur Gault, 'what an amount of nervous force there is in a man wound up to the highest pitch of passion. Dynamics and mathematics have no formulas or symbols to express that power. Why, only yesterday, I witnessed an experiment which gave me a shudder, and which accounts

for the terrible physical strength put forth just now by that little woman.'

'Tell me about it,' said Monsieur Gault, 'for I am so foolish as to take an interest in magnetism; I do not believe in it, but it mystifies me.'

'A physician who magnetises—for there are men among us who believe in magnetism,' Lebrun went on, 'offered to experiment on me in proof of a phenomenon that he described and I doubted. Curious to see with my own eyes one of the strange states of nervous tension by which the existence of magnetism is demonstrated, I consented.

'These are the facts.—I should very much like to know what our College of Medicine would say if each of its members in turn were subjected to this influence, which leaves no loophole for incredulity.

'My old friend—this doctor,' said Doctor Lebrun parenthetically, 'is an old man persecuted for his opinions since Mesmer's time by all the faculty; he is seventy or seventy-two years of age, and his name is Bouvard. At the present day he is the patriarchal representative of the theory of animal magnetism. This good man regards me as a son; I owe my training to him.—Well, this worthy old Bouvard it was who proposed to prove to me that nerve-force put in motion by the magnetiser was, not indeed infinite, for man is under immutable laws, but a power acting like other powers of nature whose elemental essence escapes our observation.

'"For instance," said he, "if you place your hand in that of a somnambulist who, when awake, can press it only up to a certain average of tightness, you will see that in the somnambulistic state—as it is stupidly termed—his fingers can clutch like a vice screwed up by a blacksmith."—Well, Monsieur, I placed my hand in that of a woman, not asleep, for Bouvard rejects the word, but isolated, and when the old man bid her squeeze my wrist as long and as tightly as she could, I

begged him to stop when the blood was almost bursting from my finger tips. Look, you can see the mark of her clutch, which I shall not lose for these three months.'

'The deuce!' exclaimed Monsieur Gault, as he saw a band of bruised flesh, looking like the scar of a burn.

'My dear Gault,' the doctor went on, 'if my wrist had been gripped in an iron manacle screwed tight by a locksmith, I should not have felt the bracelet of metal so hard as that woman's fingers; her hand was of unyielding steel, and I am convinced that she could have crushed my bones and broken my hand from the wrist. The pressure, beginning almost insensibly, increased without relaxing, fresh force being constantly added to the former grip; a tourniquet could not have been more effectual than that hand used as an instrument of torture.—To me, therefore, it seems proven that under the influence of passion, which is the will concentrated on one point and raised to an incalculable power of animal force, as the different varieties of electric force are also, man may direct his whole vitality, whether for attack or resistance, to one of his organs.—Now, this little lady, under the stress of her despair, had concentrated her vital force in her hands.'

'She must have a good deal too, to break a wrought-iron bar,' said the chief warder, with a shake of the head.

'There was a flaw in it,' Monsieur Gault observed.

'For my part,' said the doctor, 'I dare assign no limits to nervous force. And indeed it is by this that mothers, to save their children, can magnetise lions, climb, in a fire, along a parapet where a cat would not venture, and endure the torments that sometimes attend childbirth. In this lies the secret of the attempts made by convicts and prisoners to regain their liberty. The extent of our vital energies is as yet unknown; they are part of the energy of nature itself, and we draw them from unknown reservoirs.'

'Monsieur,' said a warder in an undertone to the Governor, coming close to him as he was escorting Doctor Lebrun as far as the outer gates of the Conciergerie, 'Number 2 in the secret cells says he is ill, and needs the doctor; he declares he is dying,' added the turnkey.

'Indeed,' said the Governor.

'His breath rattles in his throat,' replied the man.

'It is five o'clock,' said the doctor; 'I have had no dinner. But, after all, here I am at hand. Come, let us see.'

'Number 2, as it happens, is the Spanish priest suspected of being Jacques Collin,' said Monsieur Gault to the doctor, 'and one of the persons suspected of the crime in which that poor young man was implicated.'

'I saw him this morning,' replied the doctor. 'Monsieur Camusot sent for me to give evidence as to the state of the rascal's health, and I may assure you that he is perfectly well, and could make a fortune by playing the part of Hercules in a troupe of athletes.'

'Perhaps he wants to kill himself too,' said Monsieur Gault. 'Let us both go down to the cells together, for I ought to go there if only to transfer him to an upper room. Monsieur Camusot has given orders to mitigate this anonymous gentleman's confinement.'

Jacques Collin, known as Trompe-la-Mort in the world of the hulks, who must henceforth be called only by his real name, had gone through terrible distress of mind since, after hearing Camusot's order, he had been taken back to the underground cell—an anguish such as he had never before known in the course of a life diversified by many crimes, by three escapes, and two sentences at the Assizes. And is there not something monstrously fine in the dog-like attachment shown to the man he had made his friend by this wretch in whom were concentrated all the life, the powers, the spirit, and

the passions of the hulks, who was, so to speak, their highest expression?

Wicked, infamous, and in so many ways horrible, this absolute worship of his idol makes him so truly interesting that this Study, long as it is already, would seem incomplete and cut short if the close of this criminal career did not come as a sequel to Lucien de Rubempré's end. The little spaniel being dead, we want to know whether his terrible playfellow the lion will live on.

In real life, in society, every event is so inevitably linked to other events, that one cannot occur without the rest. The water of the great river forms a sort of fluid floor; not a wave, however rebellious, however high it may toss itself, but its powerful crest must sink to the level of the mass of waters, stronger by the momentum of its course than the revolt of the surges it bears with it.

And just as you watch the current flow, seeing in it a confused sheet of images, so perhaps you would like to measure the pressure exerted by social energy on the vortex called Vautrin; to see how far away the rebellious eddy will be carried ere it is lost, and what the end will be of this really diabolical man, human still by the power of loving—so hardly can that heavenly grace perish, even in the most cankered heart.

This wretched convict, embodying the poem that has smiled on many a poet's fancy—on Moore, on Lord Byron, on Mathurin, on Canalis—the demon who has drawn an angel down to hell to refresh him with dews stolen from heaven,—this Jacques Collin will be seen, by the reader who has understood that iron soul, to have sacrificed his own life for seven years past. His vast powers, absorbed in Lucien, acted solely for Lucien; he lived in his progress, his loves, his ambitions. To him Lucien was his own soul made visible.

It was Trompe-la-Mort who dined with the Grand-

lieus, stole into ladies' boudoirs, and loved Esther by proxy. In fact, in Lucien he saw Jacques Collin, young, handsome, noble, and rising to the dignity of an ambassador.

Trompe-la-Mort had realised the German superstition of a *doppelganger* by means of a spiritual paternity, a phenomenon which will be quite intelligible to those women who have ever truly loved, who have felt their soul merge in that of the man they adore, who have lived his life, whether noble or infamous, happy or unhappy, obscure or brilliant; who, in defiance of distance, have felt a pain in their leg if he were wounded in his; who if he fought a duel have been aware of it; and who, to put the matter in a nutshell, did not need to be told he was unfaithful to know it.

As he went back to his cell, Jacques Collin said to himself, 'The boy is being examined.'

And he shivered—he who thought no more of killing a man than a labourer does of drinking.

'Has he been able to see his mistresses?' he wondered. 'Has my aunt succeeded in catching those damned females? Have these Duchesses and Countesses bestirred themselves and prevented his being examined? Has Lucien had my instructions? And if ill-luck will have it that he is cross-questioned, how will he carry it off? Poor boy, and I have brought him to this! It is that rascal Paccard and that sneak Europe who have caused all this rumpus by collaring the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs for the certificate Nucingen gave Esther. That precious pair tripped us up at the last step; but I will make them pay dear for their pranks.

'One day more and Lucien would have been a rich man; he might have married his Clotilde de Grandlieu. —Then the boy would have been all my own!—And to think that our fate depends on a look, on a blush of Lucien's under Camusot's eye, who sees everything, and

has all a judge's wits about him! For when he showed me the letters we tipped each other a wink in which we took each other's measure, and he guessed that I can make Lucien's lady-loves fork out.'

This soliloquy lasted for three hours. His torments were so great that they were too much for that frame of iron and vitriol; Jacques Collin, whose brain felt on fire with insanity, suffered such fearful thirst that he unconsciously drank up all the water contained in one of the pails with which the cell was supplied, forming, with the bed, all its furniture.

'If he loses his head, what will become of him?—for the poor child has not Théodore's tenacity,' said he to himself, as he lay down on the camp-bed—like a bed in a guard-room.

A word must here be said about this Théodore, remembered by Jacques Collin at such a critical moment. Théodore Calvi, a young Corsican, imprisoned for life at the age of eighteen for eleven murders, thanks to influential interference paid for with vast sums, had been made the fellow convict of Jacques Collin, to whom he was chained, in 1819 and 1820. Jacques Collin's last escape, one of his finest inventions—for he had got out disguised as a gendarme leading Théodore Calvi as he was, a convict called before the commissary of police—had been effected in the seaport of Rochefort, where the convicts die by dozens, and where, it was hoped, that these two dangerous rascals would have ended their days. Though they escaped together, the difficulties of their flight had forced them to separate. Théodore was caught and restored to the hulks.

After getting to Spain and metamorphosing himself into Don Carlos Herrera, Jacques Collin was on his way to look for his Corsican at Rochefort, when he met Lucien on the banks of the Charente. The hero of the banditti of the Corsican scrub, to whom Trompe-la-

Mort owed his knowledge of Italian, was of course sacrificed to the new idol.

Indeed, a life with Lucien, a youth innocent of all crime, who had only minor sins on his conscience, dawned on him as bright and glorious as a summer sun; while with Théodore, Jacques Collin could look forward to no end but the scaffold after a career of indispensable crimes.

The thought of disaster as a result of Lucien's weakness—for his experience of an underground cell would certainly have turned his brain—took vast proportions in Jacques Collin's mind; and, contemplating the probabilities of such a misfortune, the unhappy man felt his eyes fill with tears, a phenomenon that had been utterly unknown to him since his earliest childhood.

'I must be in a furious fever,' said he to himself; 'and perhaps if I send for the doctor and offer him a handsome sum, he will put me in communication with Lucien.'

At this moment the turnkey brought in his dinner.

'It is quite useless, my boy; I cannot eat. Tell the governor of this prison to send the doctor to see me. I am very bad, and I believe my last hour has come.'

Hearing the guttural rattle that accompanied these words, the warder bowed and went. Jacques Collin clung wildly to this hope; but when he saw the doctor and the governor come in together, he perceived that the attempt was abortive, and coolly awaited the upshot of the visit, holding out his wrist for the doctor to feel his pulse.

'The Abbé is feverish,' said the doctor to Monsieur Gault, 'but it is the type of fever we always find in inculpated prisoners—and to me,' he added, in the governor's ear, 'it is always a sign of some degree of guilt.'

Just then the governor, to whom the public prosecutor had intrusted Lucien's letter to be given to Jacques Collin, left the doctor and the prisoner together under the guard of the warder, and went to fetch the letter.

'Monsieur,' said Jacques Collin, seeing the warder outside the door, and not understanding why the governor had left them, 'I should think nothing of thirty thousand francs if I might send five lines to Lucien de Rubempré.'

'I will not rob you of your money,' said Doctor Lebrun; 'no one in this world can ever communicate with him again——'

'No one?' said the prisoner in amazement. 'Why?'

'He has hanged himself——'

No tigress robbed of her whelps ever startled an Indian jungle with a yell so fearful as that of Jacques Collin, who rose to his feet as a tiger rears to spring, and fired a glance at the doctor as scorching as the flash of a falling thunderbolt. Then he fell back on the bed, exclaiming—

'Oh, my son!'

'Poor man!' said the doctor, moved by this terrific convulsion of nature.

In fact, the first explosion gave way to such utter collapse, that the words, 'Oh, my son,' were but a murmur.

'Is this one going to die in our hands too?' said the turnkey.

'No; it is impossible!' Jacques Collin went on, raising himself and looking at the two witnesses of the scene with a dead, cold eye. 'You are mistaken; it is not Lucien; you did not see. A man cannot hang himself in one of these cells. Look—how could I hang myself here? All Paris shall answer to me for that boy's life! God owes it to me!'

The warder and the doctor were amazed in their turn—they, whom nothing had astonished for many a long day.

On seeing the governor, Jacques Collins, crushed by the very violence of this outburst of grief, seemed somewhat calmer.

'Here is a letter which the public prosecutor placed in my hands for you, with permission to give it you sealed,' said Monsieur Gault.

'From Lucien?' said Jacques Collin.

'Yes, Monsieur.'

'Is not that young man——'

'He is dead,' said the governor. 'Even if the doctor had been on the spot, he would, unfortunately, have been too late. The young man died—there—in one of the rooms——'

'May I see him with my own eyes?' asked Jacques Collin timidly. 'Will you allow a father to weep over the body of his son?'

'You can, if you like, take his room, for I have orders to remove you from these cells; you are no longer in such close confinement, Monsieur.'

The prisoner's eyes, from which all light and warmth had fled, turned slowly from the governor to the doctor; Jacques Collin was examining them, fearing some trap, and he was afraid to go out of the cell.

'If you wish to see the body,' said Lebrun, 'you have no time to lose; it is to be carried away to-night.'

'If you have children, gentlemen,' said Jacques Collin, 'you will understand my state of mind; I hardly know what I am doing. This blow is worse to me than death; but you cannot know what I am saying. Even if you are fathers, it is only after a fashion—I am a mother too—I—I am going mad—I feel it!'

By going through certain passages which open only to the governor, it is possible to get very quickly from the cells to the private rooms. The two sets of rooms are divided by an underground corridor formed of two massive walls supporting the vault over which the Galerie Marchande, as it is called, is built. So Jacques Collin, escorted by the warder, who took his arm, preceded by the governor, and followed by the doctor, in a

few minutes reached the cell where Lucien was lying stretched on the bed.

On seeing the body, he threw himself upon it, seizing it in a desperate embrace with a passion and impulse that made these spectators shudder.

'There,' said the doctor to Monsieur Gault, 'that is an instance of what I was telling you. You see that man clutching the body, and you do not know what a corpse is; it is stone——'

'Leave me alone!' said Jacques Collin in a smothered voice; 'I have not long to look at him. They will take him away to——'

He paused at the word 'bury him.'

'You will allow me to have some relic of my dear boy! Will you be so kind as to cut off a lock of his hair for me, Monsieur,' he said to the doctor, 'for I cannot——'

'He was certainly his son,' said Lebrun.

'Do you think so?' replied the governor in a meaning tone, which made the doctor thoughtful for a few minutes.

The governor gave orders that the prisoner was to be left in this cell, and that some locks of hair should be cut for the self-styled father before the body should be removed.

At half-past five in the month of May it is easy to read a letter in the Conciergerie in spite of the iron bars and the close wire trellice that guard the windows. So Jacques Collin read the dreadful letter while he still held Lucien's hand.

The man is not known who can hold a lump of ice for ten minutes tightly clutched in the hollow of his hand. The cold penetrates to the very life-springs with mortal rapidity. But the effect of that cruel chill, acting like a poison, is as nothing to that which strikes to the soul from the cold, rigid hand of the dead thus held. Thus Death speaks to Life; it tells many dark secrets which

kill many feelings; for in matters of feeling is not change death?

As we read through once more, with Jacques Collin, Lucien's last letter, it will strike us as being what it was to this man—a cup of poison:—

'*To the Abbé Carlos Herrera.*

'MY DEAR ABBÉ,—I have had only benefits from you, and I have betrayed you. This involuntary ingratitude is killing me, and when you read these lines I shall have ceased to exist. You are not here now to save me.

'You had given me full liberty, if I should find it advantageous, to destroy you by flinging you on the ground like a cigar-end; but I have ruined you by a blunder. To escape from a difficulty, deluded by a clever question from the examining judge, your son by adoption and grace went over to the side of those who aim at killing you at any cost, and insist on proving an identity which I know to be impossible, between you and a French villain. All is said.

'Between a man of your calibre and me—me of whom you tried to make a greater man than I am capable of being—no foolish sentiment can come at the moment of final parting. You hoped to make me powerful and famous, and you have thrown me into the gulf of suicide—that is all. I have long heard the broad pinions of that vertigo beating over my head.

'As you have sometimes said, there is the posterity of Cain and the posterity of Abel. In the great human drama Cain is in opposition. You are descended from Adam through that line, in which the devil still fans the fire of which the first spark was flung on Eve. Among the demons of that pedigree, from time to time we see one of stupendous power, summing up every form of human energy, and resembling the fevered beasts of the desert, whose vitality demands the vast spaces they find

there. Such men are as dangerous as lions would be in the heart of Normandy; they must have their prey, and they devour common men and crop the money of fools. Their sport is so dangerous, that at last they kill the humble dog whom they have taken for a companion and made an idol of.

'When it is God's will, these mysterious beings may be a Moses, an Attila, Charlemagne, Mahomet, or Napoleon; but when He leaves a generation of these stupendous tools to rust at the bottom of the ocean, they are no more than a Pugatcheff, a Fouché, a Louvel, or the Abbé Carlos Herrera. Gifted with immense power over tenderer souls, they entrap them and mangle them. It is grand, it is fine—in its way. It is the poisonous plant with gorgeous colouring that fascinates children in the woods. It is the poetry of evil. Men like you ought to dwell in caves and never come out of them. You have made me live that vast life, and I have had all my share of existence; so I may very well take my head out of the Gordian knot of your policy, and slip it into the running knot of my cravat.

'To repair the mischief I have done you, I am forwarding to the public prosecutor a retractation of my deposition. You will know how to take advantage of this document.

'In virtue of a Will formally drawn up, restitution will be made, Monsieur l'Abbé, of the moneys belonging to your Order which you so imprudently devoted to my use as a result of your paternal affection for me.

'And so farewell. Farewell, colossal image of Evil and Corruption; farewell to you, who, if started on the right road, might have been greater than Ximenes, greater than Richelieu! You have kept your promises. I find myself once more just as I was on the banks of the Charente, after enjoying, by your help, the enchantments of a dream. But, unfortunately, it is not now in the waters of my native place that I shall drown the

errors of a boy, but in the Seine, and my hole is a cell in the Conciergerie.

'Do not regret me: my contempt for you is as great as my admiration.

'LUCIEN.'

A little before one in the morning, when the men came to fetch away the body, they found Jacques Collin kneeling by the bed, the letter on the floor, dropped, no doubt, as a suicide drops the pistol that has shot him; but the unhappy man still held Lucien's hand between his own, and was praying to God.

On seeing this man, the porters paused for a moment, for he looked like one of those stone images, kneeling to all eternity on a mediæval tomb, the work of some stone-carver's genius. The sham priest, with eyes as bright as a tiger's, but stiffened into supernatural rigidity, so impressed the men that they gently bid him rise.

'Why?' he asked mildly. The audacious Trompe-la-Mort was as meek as a child.

The governor pointed him out to Monsieur de Chargebœuf; and he, respecting such grief, and believing that Jacques Collin was indeed the priest he called himself, explained the orders given by Monsieur de Granville with regard to the funeral service and arrangements, showing that it was absolutely necessary that the body should be transferred to Lucien's lodgings, Quai Malaquais, where the priests were waiting to watch by it for the rest of the night.

'It is worthy of that gentleman's well-known magnanimity,' said Jacques Collin sadly. 'Tell him, Monsieur, that he may rely on my gratitude. Yes, I am in a position to do him great service. Do not forget these words; they are of the utmost importance to him.

'Oh, Monsieur! strange changes come over a man's spirit when for seven hours he has wept over such a son as he—— And I shall see him no more!'

After gazing once more at Lucien with the expression of a mother bereft of her child's remains, Jacques Collin sank in a heap. As he saw Lucien's body carried away, he uttered a groan that made the men hurry off. The public prosecutor's private secretary and the governor of the prison had already made their escape from the scene.

What had become of that iron spirit; of the decision which was a match in swiftness for the eye; of the nature in which thought and action flashed forth together like one flame; of the sinews hardened by three spells of labour on the hulks, and by three escapes, the muscles which had acquired the metallic temper of a savage's limbs? Iron will yield to a certain amount of hammering or persistent pressure; its impenetrable molecules, purified and made homogeneous by man, may become disintegrated, and without being in a state of fusion the metal has lost its power of resistance. Blacksmiths, locksmiths, tool-makers sometimes express this state by saying the iron is *retting*, appropriating a word applied exclusively to hemp, which is reduced to pulp and fibre by maceration. Well, the human soul, or, if you will, the threefold powers of body, heart, and intellect, under certain repeated shocks, get into such a condition as fibrous iron. They too are disintegrated. Science and law and the public seek a thousand causes for the terrible catastrophes on railways caused by the rupture of an iron rail, that of Bellevue being a famous instance; but no one has asked the evidence of the real experts in such matters, the blacksmiths, who all say the same thing, 'The iron was stringy!' The danger cannot be foreseen. Metal that has gone soft, and metal that has preserved its tenacity, both look exactly alike.

Priests and examining judges often find great criminals in this state. The awful experiences of the Assize Court and the 'last toilet' commonly produce this dissolution of the nervous system, even in the strongest natures.

Then confessions are blurted by the most firmly set lips; then the toughest hearts break; and, strange to say, always at the moment when these confessions are useless, when this weakness as of death snatches from the man the mask of innocence which made Justice uneasy—for it always is uneasy when the criminal dies without confessing his crime.

Napoleon went through this collapse of every human power on the field of Waterloo.

At eight in the morning, when the warder of the better cells entered the room where Jacques Collin was confined, he found him pale and calm, like a man who has collected all his strength by sheer determination.

'It is the hour for airing in the prison-yard,' said the turnkey; 'you have not been out for three days; if you choose to take air and exercise, you may.'

Jacques Collin, lost in his absorbing thoughts, and taking no interest in himself, regarding himself as a garment with no body in it, a perfect rag, never suspected the trap laid for him by Bibi-Lupin, nor the importance attaching to his walk in the prison-yard.

The unhappy man went out mechanically, along the corridor, by the cells built into the magnificent cloisters of the Palace of the Kings, over which is the corridor Saint-Louis, as it is called, leading to the various purlieus of the Court of Appeals. This passage joins that of the better cells; and it is worth noting that the cell in which Louvel was imprisoned, one of the most famous of the regicides, is the room at the right angle formed by the junction of the two corridors. Under the pretty room in the Tour Bonbec there is a spiral staircase leading from the dark passage, and serving the prisoners who are lodged in these cells to go up and down on their way from or to the yard.

Every prisoner, whether committed for trial or already sentenced, and the prisoners under suspicion who have been reprieved from the closest cells—in short, every

one in confinement in the Conciergerie takes exercise in this narrow paved courtyard for some hours every day, especially the early hours of summer mornings. This recreation ground, the anteroom to the scaffold or the hulks on one side, on the other still clings to the world through the gendarme, the examining judge, and the Assize Court. It strikes a greater chill perhaps than even the scaffold. The scaffold may be a pedestal to soar to heaven from; but the prison-yard is every infamy on earth concentrated and unavoidable.

Whether at La Force or at Poissy, at Melun, or at Sainte-Pélagie, a prison-yard is a prison-yard. The same details are exactly repeated, all but the colour of the walls, their height, and the space enclosed. So this Study of Manners would be false to its name if it did not include an exact description of this Pandemonium of Paris.

Under the mighty vaulting which supports the lower courts and the Court of Appeals there is, close to the fourth arch, a stone slab, used by Saint-Louis, it is said, for the distribution of alms, and doing duty in our day as a counter for the sale of eatables to the prisoners. So as soon as the prison-yard is open to the prisoners, they gather round this stone table, which displays such dainties as gaol-birds desire—brandy, rum, and the like.

The two first archways on that side of the yard, facing the fine Byzantine corridor—the only vestige now of Saint-Louis' elegant palace—form a parlour, where the prisoners and their counsel may meet, to which the prisoners have access through a formidable gateway—a double passage, railed off by enormous bars, within the width of the third archway. This double way is like the temporary passages arranged at the door of a theatre to keep the line on occasions when a great success brings a crowd. This parlour, at the very end of the vast entrance-hall of the Conciergerie, and lighted by loop-holes on the yard side, has lately been opened out

towards the back, and the opening filled with glass, so that the interviews of the lawyers with their clients are under supervision. This innovation was made necessary by the too great fascinations brought to bear by pretty women on their counsel. Where will morality stop short? Such precautions are like the ready-made sets of questions for self-examination, where pure imaginations are defiled by meditating on unknown and monstrous depravity. In this parlour, too, parents and friends may be allowed by the authorities to meet the prisoners, whether on remand or awaiting their sentence.

The reader may now understand what the prison-yard is to the two hundred prisoners in the Conciergerie: their garden—a garden without trees, beds, or flowers—in short, a prison-yard. The parlour, and the stone of Saint-Louis, where such food and liquor as are allowed are dispensed, are the only possible means of communication with the outer world.

The hour spent in the yard is the only time when the prisoner is in the open air or the society of his kind; in other prisons those who are sentenced for a term are brought together in workshops; but in the Conciergerie no occupation is allowed, excepting in the privileged cells. There the absorbing idea in every mind is the drama of the Assize Court, since the culprit comes only to be examined or to be sentenced.

This yard is indeed terrible to behold; it cannot be imagined, it must be seen.

In the first place, the assemblage, in a space forty mètres long by thirty wide, of a hundred condemned or suspected criminals, does not constitute the cream of society. These creatures, belonging for the most part to the lowest ranks, are poorly clad; their countenances are base or horrible, for a criminal from the upper sphere of society is, happily, a rare exception. Peculation, forgery, or fraudulent bankruptcy, the only crimes that can bring decent folks so low, enjoy the privilege of

the better cells, and then the prisoner scarcely ever quits it.

This promenade, bounded by fine but formidable blackened walls, by a cloister divided up into cells, by fortifications on the side towards the quay, by the barred cells of the better class on the north, watched by vigilant warders, and filled with a herd of criminals, all meanly suspicious of each other, is depressing enough in itself; and it becomes terrifying when you find yourself the centre of all those eyes full of hatred, curiosity, and despair, face to face with that degraded crew. Not a gleam of gladness! all is gloom—the place and the men. All is speechless—the walls and men's consciences. To these hapless creatures danger lies everywhere; excepting in the case of an alliance as ominous as the prison where it was formed, they dare not trust each other.

The police, all-pervading, poisons the atmosphere and taints everything, even the hand-grasp of two criminals who have been intimate. A convict who meets his most familiar comrade does not know that he may not have repented and have made a confession to save his life. This absence of confidence, this dread of the *nark*, mars the liberty, already so illusory, of the prison-yard. The 'nark' (in French, *le Mouton* or *le coqueur*) is a spy who affects to be sentenced for some serious offence, and whose skill consists in pretending to be a *chum*. The 'chum,' in thieves' slang, is a skilled thief, a professional who has cut himself adrift from society, and means to remain a thief all his days, and continues faithful through thick and thin to the laws of the swell-mob.

Crime and madness have a certain resemblance. To see the prisoners of the Conciergerie in the yard, or the madmen in the garden of an asylum, is much the same thing. Prisoners and lunatics walk to and fro, avoiding each other, looking up with more or less strange or vicious glances, according to the mood of the moment, but never cheerful, never grave; they know each other,

or they dread each other. The anticipation of their sentence, remorse, and apprehension give all these men exercising, the anxious, furtive look of the insane. Only the most consummate criminals have the audacity that apes the quietude of respectability, the sincerity of a clear conscience.

As men of the better class are few, and shame keeps the few whose crimes have brought them within doors, the frequenters of the prison-yard are for the most part dressed as workmen. Blouses, long and short, and velveteen jackets preponderate. These coarse or dirty garments, harmonising with the coarse and sinister faces and brutal manner—somewhat subdued, indeed, by the gloomy reflections that weigh on men in prison—everything, to the silence that reigns, contributes to strike terror or disgust into the rare visitor who, by high influence, has obtained the privilege, seldom granted, of going over the Conciergerie.

Just as the sight of an anatomical museum, where foul diseases are represented by wax models, makes the youth who may be taken there more chaste and apt for nobler and purer love, so the sight of the Conciergerie and of the prison-yard, filled with men marked for the hulks or the scaffold or some disgraceful punishment, inspires many, who might not fear that Divine Justice whose voice speaks so loudly to the conscience, with a fear of human justice; and they come out honest men for a long time after.

As the men who were exercising in the prison-yard, when Trompe-la-Mort appeared there, were to be the actors in a scene of crowning importance in the life of Jacques Collin, it will be well to depict a few of the principal personages of this sinister crowd.

Here, as everywhere when men are thrown together, here, as at school even, force, physical and moral, wins the day. Here, then, as on the hulks, crime stamps the

man's rank. Those whose head is doomed are the aristocracy. The prison-yard, as may be supposed, is a school of criminal law, which is far better learned there than at the Hall on the Place du Panthéon.

A never-failing pleasantry is to rehearse the drama of the Assize Court; to elect a president, a jury, a public prosecutor, a counsel, and to go through the whole trial. This hideous farce is played before almost every great trial. At this time a famous case was proceeding in the Criminal Court, that of the dreadful murder committed on the persons of Monsieur and Madame Crottat, the notary's father and mother, retired farmers who, as this horrible business showed, kept eight hundred thousand francs in gold in their house.

One of the men concerned in this double murder was the notorious Dannepont, known as la Pouraille, a released convict, who for five years had eluded the most active search on the part of the police, under the protection of seven or eight different names. This villain's disguises were so perfect, that he had served two years of imprisonment under the name of Delsouq, who was one of his own disciples, and a famous thief, though he never, in any of his achievements, went beyond the jurisdiction of the lower Courts. La Pouraille had committed no less than three murders since his dismissal from the hulks. The certainty that he would be executed, not less than the large fortune he was supposed to have, made this man an object of terror and admiration to his fellow-prisoners; for not a farthing of the stolen money had ever been recovered. Even after the events of July 1830, some persons may remember the terror caused in Paris by this daring crime, worthy to compare in importance with the robbery of medals from the Public Library; for the unhappy tendency of our age is to make a murder the more interesting in proportion to the greater sum of money secured by it.

La Pouraille, a small, lean, dry man, with a face like

a ferret, forty-five years old, and one of the celebrities of the prisons he had successively lived in since the age of nineteen, knew Jacques Collin well; how and why will be seen.

Two other convicts, brought with la Pouraille from La Force within these twenty-four hours, had at once acknowledged and made the whole prison-yard acknowledge the supremacy of this past-master sealed to the scaffold. One of these convicts, a ticket-of-leave man, named Sélérier, *alias* l'Auvergnat, Père Ralleau, and le Rouleur, who in the sphere known to the hulks as the swell-mob was called Fil-de-Soie (or silken thread)—a nickname he owed to the skill with which he slipped through the various perils of the business—was an old ally of Jacques Collin's.

Trompe-la-Mort so keenly suspected Fil-de-Soie of playing a double part, of being at once in the secrets of the swell-mob and a spy paid by the police, that he had supposed him to be the prime mover of his arrest in the Maison Vauquer in 1819 (*Le Père Goriot*). Sélérier, whom we must call Fil-de-Soie, as we shall also call Dannepont la Pouraille, already guilty of evading surveillance, was concerned in certain well-known robberies without bloodshed, which would certainly take him back to the hulks for at least twenty years.

The other convict, named Riganson, and his kept woman, known as la Biffe, were a most formidable couple, members of the swell-mob. Riganson, on very distant terms with the police from his earliest years, was nicknamed le Biffon. Biffon was the male of la Biffe—for nothing is sacred to the swell-mob. These fiends respect nothing, neither the law nor religion, not even natural history, whose solemn nomenclature, it is seen, is parodied by them.

Here a digression is necessary; for Jacques Collin's appearance in the prison-yard in the midst of his foes, as had been so cleverly contrived by Bibi-Lupin and the

examining judge, and the strange scenes to ensue, would be incomprehensible and impossible without some explanation as to the world of thieves and of the hulks, its laws, its manners, and, above all, its language, its hideous figures of speech being indispensable in this portion of my tale.

So, first of all, a few words must be said as to the vocabulary of sharpers, pickpockets, thieves, and murderers, known as Argot, or thieves' cant, which has of late been introduced into literature with so much success that more than one word of that strange lingo is familiar on the rosy lips of ladies, has been heard in gilded boudoirs, and become the delight of princes, who have often proclaimed themselves 'done brown' (*floué*) ! And it must be owned, to the surprise no doubt of many persons, that no language is more vigorous or more vivid than that of this underground world which, from the beginnings of countries with capitals, has dwelt in cellars and slums, in the third limbo of society everywhere (*le troisième dessous*, as the expressive and vivid slang of the theatres has it). For is not the world a stage ? *Le troisième dessous* is the lowest cellar under the stage at the Opera where the machinery is kept and the men stay who work it, whence the footlights are raised, the ghosts, the blue-devils shot up from hell, and so forth.

Every word of this language is a bold metaphor, ingenious or horrible. A man's breeches are his kicks or trucks (*montante*, a word that need not be explained). In this language you do not sleep, you snooze, or doss (*pioncer*—and note how vigorously expressive the word is of the sleep of the hunted, weary, distrustful animal called a thief, which as soon as it is in safety drops—rolls—into the gulf of deep slumber so necessary under the mighty wings of suspicion always hovering over it ; a fearful sleep, like that of a wild beast that can sleep, nay, and snore, and yet its ears are alert with caution).

In this idiom everything is savage. The syllables which begin or end the words are harsh and curiously startling. A woman is a trip or a moll (*une largue*). And it is poetical too : straw is *la plume de Beauce*, a farmyard feather bed. The word midnight is paraphrased by twelve leads striking—it makes one shiver ! *Rincer une cambriole* is to 'screw the shop,' to rifle a room. What a feeble expression is to go to bed in comparison with 'to doss' (*piausser*, make a new skin). What picturesque imagery ! Work your dominoes (*jouer des dominos*) is to eat ; how can men eat with the police at their heels ?

And this language is always growing ; it keeps pace with civilisation, and is enriched with some new expression by every fresh invention. The potato, discovered and introduced by Louis XVI. and Parmentier, was at once dubbed in French slang as the pig's orange (*Orange à Cochons*) [the Irish have called them bog oranges]. Banknotes are invented ; the 'mob' at once call them Flimsies (*fafiots garotés*, from 'Garot,' the name of the cashier whose signature they bear). Flimsy ! (*fafiot.*) Cannot you hear the rustle of the thin paper ? The thousand franc-note is male flimsy (in French), the five hundred franc-note is the female ; and convicts will, you may be sure, find some whimsical name for the hundred and two hundred franc-notes.

In 1790 Guillotin invented, with humane intent, the expeditious machine which solved all the difficulties involved in the problem of capital punishment. Convicts and prisoners from the hulks forthwith investigated this contrivance, standing as it did on the monarchical borderland of the old system and the frontier of modern legislation ; they instantly gave it the name of *l'Abbaye de Monte-à-Regret*. They looked at the angle formed by the steel blade, and described its action as reaping (*faucher*) ; and when it is remembered that the hulks are called the meadow (*le pré*), philologists must admire the

inventiveness of these horrible *vocables*, as Charles Nodier would have said.

The high antiquity of this kind of slang is also noteworthy. A tenth of the words are of old Romanesque origin, another tenth are the old Gaulish French of Rabelais. *Effondrer*, to thrash a man, to give him what for; *otolondrer*, to annoy or to 'spur' him; *cambrioler*, doing anything in a room; *aubert*, money; *Gironde*, a beauty (the name of a river of Languedoc); *fouillousse*, a pocket—a 'cly'—are all French of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The word *affe*, meaning life, is of the highest antiquity. From *affe* anything that disturbs life is called *affres* (a rowing or scolding), hence *affreux*, anything that troubles life.

About a hundred words are derived from the language of Panurge, a name symbolising the people, for it is derived from two Greek words signifying All-working.

Science is changing the face of the world by constructing railroads. In Argot the train is *le roulant Vif*, the Rattler.

The name given to the head while still on the shoulders — *la Sorbonne* — shows the antiquity of this dialect which is mentioned by very early romance-writers, as Cervantes, the Italian story-tellers, and Aretino. In all ages the moll, the prostitute, the heroine of so many old-world romances, has been the protectress, companion, and comfort of the sharper, the thief, the pickpocket, the area-sneak, and the burglar.

Prostitution and robbery are the male and female forms of protest made by the natural state against the social state. Even philosophers, the innovators of to-day, the humanitarians with the communists and Fourierists in their train, come at last, without knowing it, to the same conclusion — prostitution and theft. The thief does not argue out questions of property, of inheritance, and social responsibility, in sophistical books; he absolutely ignores them. To him theft is appropriating his own.

He does not discuss marriage; he does not complain of it; he does not insist, in printed Utopian dreams, on the mutual consent and bond of souls which can never become general; he pairs with a vehemence of which the bonds are constantly riveted by the hammer of necessity. Modern innovators write unctuous theories, long drawn, and nebulous or philanthropical romances; but the thief acts. He is as clear as a fact, as logical as a blow; and then his style!

Another thing worth noting: the world of prostitutes, thieves, and murderers of the galleys and the prisons forms a population of about sixty to eighty thousand souls, men and women. Such a world is not to be disdained in a picture of modern manners and a literary reproduction of the social body. The law, the gendarmerie, and the police constitute a body almost equal in number; is not that strange? This antagonism of persons perpetually seeking and avoiding each other, and fighting a vast and highly dramatic duel, are what are sketched in this Study. It has been the same thing with thieving and public harlotry as with the stage, the police, the priesthood, and the gendarmerie. In these six walks of life the individual contracts an indelible character. He can no longer be himself. The stigmata of ordination are as immutable as those of the soldier are. And it is the same in other callings which are strongly in opposition, strong contrasts with civilisation. These violent, eccentric, singular signs—*sui generis*—are what make the harlot, the robber, the murderer, the ticket-of-leave man, so easily recognisable by their foes, the spy and the police, to whom they are as game to the sportsman: they have a gait, a manner, a complexion, a look, a colour, a smell—in short, infallible marks about them. Hence the highly-developed art of disguise which the heroes of the hulks acquire.

One word yet as to the constitution of this world apart, which the abolition of branding, the mitigation of penalties, and the silly leniency of juries are making a

threatening evil. In about twenty years Paris will be beleaguered by an army of forty thousand reprieved criminals; the department of the Seine and its fifteen hundred thousand inhabitants being the only place in France where these poor wretches can be hidden. To them Paris is what the virgin forest is to beasts of prey.

The swell-mob, or more exactly, the upper class of thieves, which is the Faubourg Saint-Germain, the aristocracy of the tribe, had, in 1816, after the peace which made life hard for so many men, formed an association called *les grands fanandels*—the Great Pals—consisting of the most noted master-thieves and certain bold spirits at that time bereft of any means of living. This word pal means brother, friend, and comrade all in one. And these 'Great Pals,' the cream of the thieving fraternity, for more than twenty years were the Court of Appeal, the Institute of Learning, and the Chamber of Peers of this community. These men all had their private means, with funds in common, and a code of their own. They knew each other, and were pledged to help and succour each other in difficulties. And they were all superior to the tricks or snares of the police, had a charter of their own, passwords and signs of recognition.

From 1815 to 1819 these dukes and peers of the prison world had formed the famous association of the Ten-thousand (see *le Père Goriot*), so styled by reason of an agreement in virtue of which no job was to be undertaken by which less than ten thousand francs could be got.

At that very time, in 1829-30, some memoirs were brought out in which the collective force of this association and the names of the leaders were published by a famous member of the police-force. It was terrifying to find there an army of skilled rogues, male and female; so numerous, so clever, so constantly lucky, that such thieves as Pastourel, Collonge, or Chimaux, men of fifty

and sixty, were described as outlaws from society from their earliest years! What a confession of the ineptitude of justice that rogues so old should be at large!

Jacques Collin had been the cashier, not only of the 'Ten-thousand,' but also of the 'Great Pals,' the heroes of the hulks. Competent authorities admit that the hulks have always owned large sums. This curious fact is quite conceivable. Stolen goods are never recovered but in very singular cases. The condemned criminal, who can take nothing with him, is obliged to trust somebody's honesty and capacity, and to deposit his money as, in the world of honest folks, money is placed in a bank.

Long ago Bibi-Lupin, now for ten years a chief of the department of Public Safety, had been a member of the aristocracy of 'Pals.' His treason had resulted from offended pride; he had been constantly set aside in favour of Trompe-la-Mort's superior intelligence and prodigious strength. Hence his persistent vindictiveness against Jacques Collin. Hence, also, certain compromises between Bibi-Lupin and his old companions, which the magistrates were beginning to take seriously.

So in his desire for vengeance, to which the examining judge had given play under the necessity of identifying Jacques Collin, the chief of the 'Safety' had very skilfully chosen his allies by setting la Pouraille, Fil-de-Soie, and Biffon on the sham Spaniard—for la Pouraille and Fil-de-Soie both belonged to the 'Ten-thousand,' and le Biffon was a 'Great Pal.'

La Biffe, le Biffon's formidable trip, who to this day evades all the pursuit of the police by her skill in disguising herself as a lady, was at liberty. This woman, who successfully apes a marquise, a countess, a baroness, keeps a carriage and men-servants. This Jacques Collin in petticoats is the only woman who can compare with Asie, Jacques Collin's right hand. And, in fact, every hero of the hulks is backed up by a devoted woman.

Prison records and the secret papers of the law courts will tell you this; no honest woman's love, not even that of a bigot for her spiritual director, has ever been greater than the attachment of a mistress who shares the dangers of a great criminal.

With these men a passion is almost always the first cause of their daring enterprises and murders. The excessive love which—constitutionally, as the doctors say—makes woman irresistible to them, calls every moral and physical force of these powerful natures into action. Hence the idleness which consumes their days, for excesses of passion necessitate sleep and restorative food. Hence their loathing of all work, driving these creatures to have recourse to rapid ways of getting money. And yet, the need of a living, and of high living, violent as it is, is but a trifle in comparison with the extravagance to which these generous Médors are prompted by the mistress to whom they want to give jewels and dress, and who—always greedy—love rich food. The baggage wants a shawl, the lover steals it, and the woman sees in this a proof of love.

This is how robbery begins; and robbery, if we examine the human soul through a lens, will be seen to be an almost natural instinct in man.

Robbery leads to murder, and murder leads the lover step by step to the scaffold.

Ill-regulated physical desire is therefore, in these men, if we may believe the medical faculty, at the root of seven-tenths of the crimes committed. And, indeed, the proof is always found, evident, palpable at the *post-mortem* examination of the criminal after his execution. And these monstrous lovers, the scarecrows of society, are adored by their mistresses. It is this female devotion, squatting faithfully at the prison gate, always eagerly baulking the cunning of the examiner, and incorruptibly keeping the darkest secrets, which makes so many trials impenetrable mysteries.

In this, again, lies the strength as well as the weakness of the accused. In the vocabulary of a prostitute, to be honest means to break none of the laws of this attachment, to give all her money to the man who is *nabbed*, to look after his comforts, to be faithful to him in every way, to undertake anything for his sake. The bitterest insult one of these women can fling in the teeth of another wretched creature is to accuse her of infidelity to a lover *in quod* (in prison). In that case such a woman is considered to have no heart.

La Pouraille was passionately in love with a woman, as will be seen.

Fil-de-Soie, an egotistical philosopher, who thieved to provide for the future, was a good deal like Paccard, Jacques Collin's satellite, who had fled with Prudence Servien and the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs between them. He had no attachment, he contemned women, and loved no one but Fil-de-Soie.

As to le Biffon, he derived his nickname from his connection with la Biffe. (La Biffe is scavenging, rag-picking.) And these three distinguished members of *la haute pègre*, the aristocracy of roguery, had a reckoning to demand of Jacques Collin, accounts that were somewhat hard to bring to book.

No one but the cashier could know how many of his clients were still alive, and what each man's share would be. The mortality to which the depositors were peculiarly liable had formed a basis for Trompe-la-Mort's calculations when he resolved to embezzle the funds for Lucien's benefit. By keeping himself out of the way of the police and of his pals for nine years, Jacques Collin was almost certain to have fallen heir, by the terms of agreement among the associates, to two-thirds of the depositors. Besides, could he not plead that he had repaid the pals who had been scragged? In fact, no one had any hold over these *Great Pals*. His comrades trusted him by compulsion, for the hunted life led by

convicts necessitates the most delicate confidence between the gentry of this crew of savages. So Jacques Collin, a defaulter for a hundred thousand crowns, might now possibly be quit for a hundred thousand francs. At this moment, as we see, la Pouraille, one of Jacques Collin's creditors, had but ninety days to live. And la Pouraille, the possessor of a sum vastly greater, no doubt, than that placed in his pal's keeping, would probably prove easy to deal with.

One of the infallible signs by which prison governors and their agents, the police and warders, recognise old stagers (*chevaux de retour*), that is to say, men who have already *eaten beans* (*les gourganes*, a kind of haricots provided for prison fare), is their familiarity with prison ways; those who have been *in* before, of course, know the manners and customs; they are at home, and nothing surprises them.

And Jacques Collin, thoroughly on his guard, had, until now, played his part to admiration as an innocent man and stranger, both at La Force and at the Conciergerie. But now, broken by grief, and by two deaths —for he had died twice over during that dreadful night—he was Jacques Collin once more. The warder was astounded to find that the Spanish priest needed no telling as to the way to the prison-yard. The perfect actor forgot his part; he went down the corkscrew stairs in the Tour Bonbec as one who knew the Conciergerie.

'Bibi-Lupin is right,' said the turnkey to himself; 'he is an old stager; he is Jacques Collin.'

At the moment when Trompe-la-Mort appeared in the sort of frame to his figure made by the door into the tower, the prisoners, having made their purchases at the stone table called after Saint-Louis, were scattered about the yard, always too small for their number. So the newcomer was seen by all of them at once, and all the more promptly, because nothing can compare for keen-

ness with the eye of a prisoner, who in a prison-yard feels like a spider watching in its web. And this comparison is mathematically exact; for the range of vision being limited on all sides by high dark walls, the prisoners can always see, even without looking at them, the door through which the warders come and go, the windows of the parlour, and the stairs of the Tour Bonbec—the only exits from the yard. In this utter isolation every trivial incident is an event, everything is interesting; the tedium—a tedium like that of a tiger in a cage—increases their alertness tenfold.

It is necessary to note that Jacques Collin, dressed like a priest who is not strict as to costume, wore black knee breeches, black stockings, shoes with silver buckles, a black waistcoat, and a long coat of dark-brown cloth of a certain cut that betrays the priest whatever he may do, especially when these details are completed by a characteristic style of hair-cutting. Jacques Collin's wig was eminently ecclesiastical, and wonderfully natural.

'Hallo!' said la Pouraille to le Biffon, 'that's a bad sign! A rook! (*sanglier*, a priest). How did he come here?'

'He is one of their "narks"' (*trucs*, spies) 'of a new make,' replied Fil-de-Soie, 'some runner with the bracelets' (*marchand de lacets*—equivalent to a Bow Street runner) 'looking out for his man.'

The gendarme boasts of many names in French slang; when he is after a thief, he is 'the man with the *bracelets*' (*marchand de lacets*); when he has him in charge, he is a bird of ill-omen (*hirondelle de la Grève*); when he escorts him to the scaffold, he is 'groom to the guillotine' (*hussard de la guillotine*).

To complete our study of the prison-yard, two more of the prisoners must be hastily sketched in. Sélérier, *alias* l'Auvergnat, *alias* le Père Ralleau, called le Rouleur, *alias* Fil-de-Soie—he had thirty names, and as many passports—will henceforth be spoken of by this name only,

as he was called by no other among the swell-mob. This profound philosopher, who saw a spy in the sham priest, was a brawny fellow of about five feet eight, whose muscles were all marked by strange bosses. He had an enormous head in which a pair of half-closed eyes sparkled like fire—the eyes of a bird of prey, with grey, dull, skinny eyelids. At a first glance his face resembled that of a wolf, his jaws were so broad, powerful, and prominent; but the cruelty and even ferocity suggested by this likeness were counterbalanced by the cunning and eagerness of his face, though it was scarred by the smallpox. The margin of each scar being sharply cut, gave a sort of wit to his expression; it was seamed with ironies. The life of a criminal—a life of hunger and thirst, of nights spent bivouacking on the quays and river banks, on bridges and streets, and the orgies of strong drink by which successes are celebrated, had laid, as it were, a varnish over these features. Fil-de-Soie, if seen in his undisguised person, would have been marked by any constable or gendarme as his prey; but he was a match for Jacques Collin in the arts of make-up and dress. Just now Fil-de-Soie, in undress, like a great actor who is well got up only on the stage, wore a sort of shooting jacket bereft of buttons, and whose ripped button-holes showed the white lining, squalid green slippers, nankin trousers now a dingy grey, and on his head a cap without a peak, under which an old bandana was tied, streaky with rents, and washed out.

Le Biffon was a complete contrast to Fil-de-Soie. This famous robber, short, burly, and fat, but active, with a livid complexion, and deep-set black eyes, dressed like a cook, standing squarely on very bandy legs, was alarming to behold, for in his countenance all the features predominated that are most typical of the carnivorous beast.

Fil-de-Soie and le Biffon were always wheedling la Pouraille, who had lost all hope. The murderer knew

that he would be tried, sentenced, and executed within four months. Indeed, Fil-de-Soie and le Biffon, la Pouraille's chums, never called him anything but *le Chanoine de l'Abbaye de Monte-à-Regret* (a grim paraphrase for a man condemned to the guillotine). It is easy to understand why Fil-de-Soie and le Biffon should fawn on la Pouraille. The man had somewhere hidden two hundred and fifty thousand francs in gold, his share of the spoil found in the house of the Crottats, the 'victims,' in newspaper phrase. What a splendid fortune to leave to two pals, though the two old stagers would be sent back to the gallows within a few days! Le Biffon and Fil-de-Soie would be sentenced for a term of fifteen years for robbery with violence, without prejudice to the ten years' penal servitude on a former sentence, which they had taken the liberty of cutting short. So, though one had twenty-two and the other twenty-six years of imprisonment to look forward to, they both hoped to escape, and come back to find la Pouraille's mine of gold.

But the 'Ten-thousand man' kept his secret; he did not see the use of telling it before he was sentenced. He belonged to the 'upper ten' of the hulks, and had never betrayed his accomplices. His temper was well known; Monsieur Popinot, who had examined him, had not been able to get anything out of him.

This terrible trio were at the further end of the prison-yard, that is to say, near the better class of cells. Fil-de-Soie was giving a lecture to a young man who was *in* for his first offence, and who, being certain of ten years' penal servitude, was gaining information as to the various convict establishments.

'Well, my boy,' Fil-de-Soie was saying sententiously as Jacques Collin appeared on the scene, 'the difference between Brest, Toulon, and Rochefort is——'

'Well, old cock?' said the lad, with the curiosity of a novice.

This prisoner, a man of good family, accused of forgery, had come down from the cell next to that where Lucien had been.

'My son,' Fil-de-Soie went on, 'at Brest you are sure to get some beans at the third turn if you dip your spoon in the bowl; at Toulon you never get any till the fifth; and at Rochefort you get none at all, unless you are an old hand.'

Having spoken, the philosopher joined le Biffon and la Pouraille, and all three, greatly puzzled by the priest, walked down the yard, while Jacques Collin, lost in grief, came up it. Trompe-la-Mort, absorbed in terrible meditations, the meditations of a fallen emperor, did not think of himself as the centre of observation, the object of general attention, and he walked slowly, gazing at the fatal window where Lucien had hanged himself. None of the prisoners knew of this catastrophe, since, for reasons to be presently explained, the young forger had not mentioned the subject. The three pals agreed to cross the priest's path.

'He is no priest,' said Fil-de-Soie; 'he is an old stager. Look how he drags his right foot.'

It is needful to explain here—for not every reader has had a fancy to visit the galleys—that each convict is chained to another, an old one and a young one always as a couple; the weight of this chain riveted to a ring above the ankle is so great as to induce a limp, which the convict never loses. Being obliged to exert one leg much more than the other to drag this fetter (*manicle* is the slang name for such irons), the prisoner inevitably gets into the habit of making the effort. Afterwards, though he no longer wears the chain, it acts upon him still; as a man still feels an amputated leg, the convict is always conscious of the anklet, and can never get over that trick of walking. In police slang, he 'drags his right.' And this sign, as well known to convicts among themselves as it is to the police, even if it does

not help to identify a comrade, at any rate confirms recognition.

In Trompe-la-Mort, who had escaped eight years since, this trick had to a great extent worn off; but just now, lost in reflections, he walked at such a slow and solemn pace that, slight as the limp was, it was strikingly evident to so practised an eye as la Pouraille's. And it is quite intelligible that convicts, always thrown together, as they must be, and never having any one else to study, will so thoroughly have watched each other's faces and appearance, that certain tricks will have impressed them which may escape their systematic foes—spies, gendarmes, and police-inspectors.

Thus it was a peculiar twitch of the maxillary muscles of the left cheek, recognised by a convict who was sent to a review of the Legion of the Seine, which led to the arrest of the lieutenant-colonel of that corps, the famous Coignard; for, in spite of Bibi-Lupin's confidence, the police could not dare believe that the Comte Pontis de Sainte-Hélène and Coignard were one and the same man.

'He is our boss!' (*dâb* or master,) said Fil-de-Soie, seeing in Jacques Collin's eye the vague glance a man sunk in despair casts on all his surroundings.

'By Jingo! Yes, it is Trompe-la-Mort,' said le Biffon, rubbing his hands. 'Yes, it is his cut, his build; but what has he done to himself? He looks quite different.'

'I know what he is up to!' cried Fil-de-Soie; 'he has some plan in his head. He wants to see the boy' (*sa tante*) 'who is to be executed before long.'

The persons known in prison slang as *tantes* or *aunts* may be best described in the ingenious words of the governor of one of the great prisons to the late Lord Durham, who, during his stay in Paris, visited every prison. So curious was he to see every detail of French justice, that he even persuaded Sanson, at that time the executioner, to erect the scaffold and decapitate a living

calf, that he might thoroughly understand the working of the machine made famous by the Revolution. The governor having shown him everything—the yards, the workshops, and the underground cells—pointed to a part of the building, and said, 'I need not take your Lordship there; it is the *quartier des tantes*.'—'Oh,' said Lord Durham, 'what are they!'—'The third sex, my Lord.'

'And they are going to scrag Théodore!' said la Pouraille, 'such a pretty boy! And such a light hand! such cheek! What a loss to society!'

'Yes, Théodore Calvi is yamming his last meal,' said le Biffon. 'His trips will pipe their eyes, for the little beggar was a great pet.'

'So you 're here, old chap?' said la Pouraille to Jacques Collin. And, arm-in-arm with his two acolytes, he barred the way to the new arrival. 'Why, Boss, have you got yourself japanned?' he went on.

'I hear you have nobbled our pile' (stolen our money), le Biffon added, in a threatening tone.

'You have just got to stump up the tin?' said Fil-de-Soie.

The three questions were fired at him like three pistol-shots.

'Do not make game of an unhappy priest sent here by mistake,' Jacques Collin replied mechanically, recognising his three comrades.

'That is the sound of his pipe, if it is not quite the cut of his mug,' said la Pouraille, laying his hand on Jacques Collin's shoulder.

This action, and the sight of his three chums, startled the 'Boss' out of his dejection, and brought him back to a consciousness of reality; for during that dreadful night he had lost himself in the infinite spiritual world of feeling, seeking some new road.

'Do not blow the gaff on your Boss!' said Jacques Collin in a hollow threatening tone, not unlike the low

growl of a lion. 'The reelers are here; let them make fools of themselves. I am faking to help a pall who is awfully down on his luck.'

He spoke with the unction of a priest trying to convert the wretched, and a look which flashed round the yard, took in the warders under the archways, and pointed them out with a wink to his three companions.

'Are there not narks about? Keep your peepers open and a sharp lookout. Don't know me, Nanty parnarly, and soap me down for a priest, or I will do for you all, you and your molls and your blunt.'

'What, do you funk our blabbing?' said Fil-de-Soie. 'Have you come to help your boy to guy?'

'Madeleine is getting ready to be turned off in the Square' (the Place de Grève), said la Pouraille.

'Théodore!' said Jacques Collin, repressing a start and a cry.

'They will have his nut off,' la Pouraille went on; 'he was booked for the scaffold two months ago.'

Jacques Collin felt sick, his knees almost failed him; but his three comrades held him up, and he had the presence of mind to clasp his hands with an expression of contrition. La Pouraille and le Biffon respectfully supported the sacrilegious Trompe-la-Mort, while Fil-de-Soie ran to a warder on guard at the gate leading to the parlour.

'That venerable priest wants to sit down; send out a chair for him,' said he.

And so Bibi-Lupin's plot had failed.

Trompe-la-Mort, like a Napoleon recognised by his soldiers, had won the submission and respect of the three felons. Two words had done it. Your molls and your blunt—your women and your money—epitomising every true affection of man. This threat was to the three convicts an indication of supreme power. The Boss still had their fortune in his hands. Still omnipotent outside

the prison, their Boss had not betrayed them, as the false pals said.

Their chief's immense reputation for skill and inventiveness stimulated their curiosity; for, in prison, curiosity is the only goad of these blighted spirits. And Jacques Collin's daring disguise, kept up even under the bolts and locks of the Conciergerie, dazzled the three felons.

'I have been in close confinement for four days and did not know that Théodore was so near the *Abbaye*,' said Jacques Collin. 'I came in to save a poor little chap who scragged himself here yesterday at four o'clock, and now here is another misfortune. I have not an ace in my hand——'

'Poor old boy!' said Fil-de-Soie.

'Old Scratch has cut me!' cried Jacques Collin, tearing himself free from his supporters, and drawing himself up with a fierce look. 'There comes a time when the world is too many for us! The beaks gobble us up at last.'

The governor of the Conciergerie, informed of the Spanish priest's weak state, came himself to the prison-yard to observe him; he made him sit down on a chair in the sun, studying him with the keen acumen which increases day by day in the practice of such functions, though hidden under an appearance of indifference.

'Oh! Heaven!' cried Jacques Collin. 'To be mixed up with such creatures, the dregs of society—felons and murderers!—But God will not desert His servant! My dear sir, my stay here shall be marked by deeds of charity which shall live in men's memories. I will convert these unhappy creatures, they shall learn they have souls, that life eternal awaits them, and that though they have lost all on earth, they still may win heaven—Heaven which they may purchase by true and genuine repentance.'

Twenty or thirty prisoners had gathered in a group behind the three terrible convicts, whose ferocious looks

had kept a space of three feet between them and their inquisitive companions, and they heard this address, spoken with evangelical unction.

'Ay, Monsieur Gault,' said the formidable la Pouraille, 'we will listen to what this one may say——'

'I have been told,' Jacques Collin went on, 'that there is in this prison a man condemned to death.'

'The rejection of his appeal is at this moment being read to him,' said Monsieur Gault.

'I do not know what that means,' said Jacques Collin, artlessly looking about him.

'Golly, what a flat!' said the young fellow, who, a few minutes since, had asked Fil-de-Soie about the beans on the hulks.

'Why, it means that he is to be scragged to-day or to-morrow.'

'Scragged?' asked Jacques Collin, whose air of innocence and ignorance filled his three pals with admiration.

'In their slang,' said the governor, 'that means that he will suffer the penalty of death. If the clerk is reading the appeal, the executioner will no doubt have orders for the execution. The unhappy man has persistently refused the offices of the chaplain.'

'Ah! Monsieur le Directeur, this is a soul to save!' cried Jacques Collin, and the sacrilegious wretch clasped his hands with the expression of a despairing lover, which to the watchful governor seemed nothing less than divine fervour. 'Ah, Monsieur,' Trompe-la-Mort went on, 'let me prove to you what I am, and how much I can do, by allowing me to incite that hardened heart to repentance. God has given me a power of speech which produces great changes. I crush men's hearts; I open them.—What are you afraid of? Send me with an escort of gendarmes, of turnkeys—whom you will.'

'I will inquire whether the prison chaplain will allow you to take his place,' said Monsieur Gault.

And the governor withdrew, struck by the expression,

perfectly indifferent, though inquisitive, with which the convicts and the prisoners on remand stared at this priest, whose unctuous tones lent a charm to his half-French, half-Spanish lingo.

'How did you come in here, Monsieur l'Abbé?' asked the youth who had questioned Fil-de-Soie.

'Oh, by a mistake!' replied Jacques Collin, eyeing the young gentleman from head to foot. 'I was found in the house of a courtesan who had died, and was immediately robbed. It was proved that she had killed herself, and the thieves—probably the servants—have not yet been caught.'

'And it was for that theft that your young man hanged himself?'

'The poor boy, no doubt, could not endure the thought of being blighted by his unjust imprisonment,' said Trompe-la-Mort, raising his eyes to heaven.

'Ay,' said the young man; 'they were coming to set him free just when he had killed himself. What bad luck!'

'Only innocent souls can be thus worked on by their imagination,' said Jacques Collin. 'For, observe, he was the loser by the theft.'

'How much money was it?' asked Fil-de-Soie, the deep and cunning.

'Seven hundred and fifty thousand francs,' said Jacques Collin blandly.

The three convicts looked at each other and withdrew from the group that had gathered round the sham priest.

'He screwed the moll's place himself!' said Fil-de-Soie in a whisper to le Biffon, 'and they want to put us in a blue funk for our cartwheels' (*thunes de balles*, five-franc pieces).

'He will always be the boss of the swells,' replied la Pouraille. 'Our pieces are safe enough.'

La Pouraille, wishing to find some man he could trust, had an interest in considering Jacques Collin an

honest man. And in prison, of all places, a man believes what he hopes.

'I lay you anything, he will come round the big Boss and save his chum!' said Fil-de-Soie.

'If he does that,' said le Biffon, 'though I don't believe he is really God, he must certainly have smoked a pipe with old Scratch, as they say.'

'Didn't you hear him say, "Old Scratch has cut me"?' said Fil-de-Soie.

'Oh!' cried la Pouraille, 'if only he would save my nut, what a time I would have with my whack of the shiners and the yellow boys I have stowed.'

'Do what he bids you!' said Fil-de-Soie.

'You don't say so?' retorted la Pouraille, looking at his pal.

'What a flat you are! You will be booked for the Abbaye!' said le Biffon. 'You have no other door to budge, if you want to keep on your pins, to yam, wet your whistle, and fake to the end; you must take his orders.'

'That's all right,' said la Pouraille. 'There is not one of us that will blow the gaff, or if he does, I will take him where I am going——'

'And he'll do it too,' cried Fil-de-Soie.

The least sympathetic reader, who has no pity for this strange race, may conceive of the state of mind of Jacques Collin, finding himself between the dead body of the idol whom he had been bewailing during five hours that night, and the imminent end of his former comrade—the dead body of Théodore, the young Corsican. Only to see the boy would demand extraordinary cleverness; to save him would need a miracle; but he was thinking of it.

For the better comprehension of what Jacques Collin proposed to attempt, it must here be remarked that murderers and thieves, all the men who people the galleys,

are not so formidable as is generally supposed. With a few rare exceptions these creatures are all cowards, in consequence, no doubt, of the constant alarms which weigh on their spirit. The faculties being perpetually on the stretch in thieving, and the success of a stroke of business depending on the exertion of every vital force, with a readiness of wit to match their dexterity of hand, and an alertness which exhausts the nervous system; these violent exertions of will once over, they become stupid, just as a singer or a dancer drops quite exhausted after a fatiguing *pas seul*, or one of those tremendous duets which modern composers inflict on the public.

Malefactors are, in fact, so entirely bereft of common sense, or so much oppressed by fear, that they become absolutely childish. Credulous to the last degree, they are caught by the bird-lime of the simplest snare. When they have done a successful *job*, they are in such a state of prostration that they immediately rush into the debaucheries they crave for; they get drunk on wine and spirits, and throw themselves madly into the arms of their women to recover composure by dint of exhausting their strength, and to forget their crime by forgetting their reason.

Then they are at the mercy of the police. When once they are in custody they lose their head, and long for hope so blindly that they believe anything; indeed, there is nothing too absurd for them to accept it. An instance will suffice to show how far the simplicity of a criminal who has been *nabbed* will carry him. Bibi-Lupin, not long before, had extracted a confession from a murderer of nineteen by making him believe that no one under age was ever executed. When this lad was transferred to the Conciergerie to be sentenced after the rejection of his appeal, this terrible man came to see him.

'Are you sure you are not yet twenty?' said he

'Yes, I am only nineteen and a half.'

'Well, then,' replied Bibi-Lupin, 'you may be quite sure of one thing—you will never see twenty.'

'Why?'

'Because you will be scragged within three days,' replied the police agent.

The murderer, who had believed even after sentence was passed, that a minor would never be executed, collapsed like an *omelette soufflée.*

Such men, cruel only from the necessity for suppressing evidence, for they murder only to get rid of witnesses (and this is one of the arguments adduced by those who desire the abrogation of capital punishment),—these giants of dexterity and skill, whose sleight of hand, whose rapid sight, whose every sense is as alert as that of a savage, are heroes of evil only on the stage of their exploits. Not only do their difficulties begin as soon as the crime is committed, for they are as much bewildered by the need for concealing the stolen goods as they were depressed by necessity—but they are as weak as a woman in childbed. The vehemence of their schemes is terrific; in success they become like children. In a word, their nature is that of the wild beast—easy to kill when it is full fed. In prison these strange beings are men in dissimulation and in secretiveness, which never yields till the last moment, when they are crushed and broken by the tedium of imprisonment.

It may hence be understood how it was that the three convicts, instead of betraying their chief, were eager to serve him; and as they suspected he was now the owner of the stolen seven hundred and fifty thousand francs, they admired him for his calm resignation, under bolt and bar of the Conciergerie, believing him capable of protecting them all.

When Monsieur Gault left the sham priest, he returned through the parlour to his office, and went in search of Bibi-Lupin, who for twenty minutes, since

Jacques Collin had gone downstairs, had been on the watch with his eye at a peephole in a window looking out on the prison-yard.

'Not one of them recognised him,' said Monsieur Gault, 'and Napolitas, who is on duty, did not hear a word. The poor priest all through the night, in his deep distress, did not say a word which could imply that his gown covers Jacques Collin.'

'That shows that he is used to prison life,' said the police agent.

Napolitas, Bibi-Lupin's secretary, being unknown to the criminals then in the Conciergerie, was playing the part of the young gentleman imprisoned for forgery.

'Well, but he wishes to be allowed to hear the confession of the young fellow who is sentenced to death,' said the governor.

'To be sure! That is our last chance,' cried Bibi-Lupin. 'I had forgotten that. Théodore Calvi, the young Corsican, was the man chained to Jacques Collin; they say that on the hulks Jacques Collin made him famous pads——'

The convicts on the galleys contrive a kind of pad to slip between their skin and the fetters to deaden the pressure of the iron ring on their ankles and instep; these pads, made of tow and rags, are known as *patarasses*.

'Who is warder over the man?' asked Bibi-Lupin.

'Cœur la Virole.'

'Very well; I will go and make up as a gendarme, and be on the watch; I shall hear what they say. I will be even with them.'

'But if it should be Jacques Collin, are you not afraid of his recognising you and throttling you?' said the governor to Bibi-Lupin.

'As a gendarme I shall have my sword,' replied the other; 'and, besides, if he is Jacques Collin, he will

never do anything that will risk his neck ; and if he is a priest, I shall be safe.'

'Then you have no time to lose,' said Monsieur Gault ; 'it is half-past eight. Father Sauteloup has just read the reply to his appeal, and Monsieur Sanson is waiting in the order-room.'

'Yes, it is to-day's job, the "widows' huzzars"' (*les hussards de la veuve*, another horrible name for the functionaries of the guillotine) 'are ordered out,' replied Bibi-Lupin. 'Still, I cannot wonder that the prosecutor-general should hesitate ; the boy has always declared that he is innocent, and there is, in my opinion, no conclusive evidence against him.'

'He is a thorough Corsican,' said Monsieur Gault ; 'he has not said a word, and has held firm all through.'

The last words of the governor of the prison summed up the dismal tale of a man condemned to die. A man cut off from among the living by law belongs to the Bench. The Bench is paramount ; it is answerable to nobody, it obeys its own conscience. The prison belongs to the Bench, which controls it absolutely. Poetry has taken possession of this social theme, 'the man condemned to death'—a subject truly apt to strike the imagination ! And poetry has been sublime on it. Prose has no resource but fact ; still, the fact is appalling enough to hold its own against verse. The existence of a condemned man who has not confessed his crime, or betrayed his accomplices, is one of fearful torment. This is no case of iron boots, of water poured into the stomach, or of limbs racked by hideous machinery ; it is hidden and, so to speak, negative torture. The condemned wretch is given over to himself with a companion whom he cannot but distrust.

The amiability of modern philanthropy fancies it has understood the dreadful torment of isolation, but this is a mistake. Since the abolition of torture, the Bench, in a natural anxiety to reassure the too sensitive consciences

of the jury, had guessed what a terrible auxiliary isolation would prove to justice in seconding remorse.

Solitude is a void ; and nature has as great a horror of a moral void as she has of a physical vacuum. Solitude is habitable only to a man of genius who can people it with ideas, the children of the spiritual world ; or to one who contemplates the works of the Creator, to whom it is bright with the light of heaven, alive with the breath and voice of God. Excepting for these two beings—so near to Paradise—solitude is to the mind what torture is to the body. Between solitude and the torture-chamber there is all the difference that there is between a nervous malady and a surgical disease. It is suffering multiplied by infinitude. The body borders on the infinite through its nerves, as the spirit does through thought. And, in fact, in the annals of the Paris law courts the criminals who do not confess can be easily counted.

This terrible situation, which in some cases assumes appalling importance—in politics, for instance, when a dynasty or a state is involved—will find a place in the HUMAN COMEDY. But here a description of the stone box in which, after the Restoration, the law shut up a man condemned to death in Paris, may serve to give an idea of the terrors of a felon's last day on earth.

Before the Revolution of July there was in the Conciergerie, and indeed there still is, a condemned cell. This room, backing on the governor's office, is divided from it by a thick wall in strong masonry, and the other side of it is formed by a wall seven or eight feet thick, which supports one end of the immense Salle des Pas-Perdus. It is entered through the first door in the long dark passage in which the eye loses itself when looking from the middle of the vaulted gateway. This ill-omened room is lighted by a funnel, barred by a formidable grating, and hardly perceptible on going into the Conciergerie yard, for it has been pierced in the narrow space between the office window close to the railing of

the gateway, and the place where the office clerk sits—a den like a cupboard contrived by the architect at the end of the entrance court.

This position accounts for the fact that the room thus enclosed between four immensely thick walls should have been devoted, when the Conciergerie was reconstituted, to this terrible and funereal service. Escape is impossible. The passage, leading to the cells for solitary confinement and to the women's quarters, faces the stove where gendarmes and warders are always collected together. The air-hole, the only outlet to the open air, is nine feet above the floor, and looks out on the first court, which is guarded by sentries at the outer gate. No human power can make any impression on the walls. Besides, a man sentenced to death is at once secured in a strait waistcoat, a garment which precludes all use of the hands; he is chained by one foot to his camp bed, and he has a fellow prisoner to watch and attend on him. The room is paved with thick flags, and the light is so dim that it is hard to see anything.

It is impossible not to feel chilled to the marrow on going in, even now, though for sixteen years the cell has never been used, in consequence of the changes effected in Paris in the treatment of criminals under sentence. Imagine the guilty man there with his remorse for company, in silence and darkness, two elements of horror, and you will wonder how he ever failed to go mad. What a nature must that be whose temper can resist such treatment, with the added misery of enforced idleness and inaction.

And yet Théodore Calvi, a Corsican, now twenty-seven years of age, muffled, as it were, in a shroud of absolute reserve, had for two months held out against the effects of this dungeon and the insidious chatter of the prisoner placed to entrap him.

These were the strange circumstances under which the Corsican had been condemned to death. Though

the case is a very curious one, our account of it must be brief. It is impossible to introduce a long digression at the climax of a narrative already so much prolonged, since its only interest is in so far as it concerns Jacques Collin, the vertebral column, so to speak, which, by its sinister persistency, connects *Le Père Goriot* with *Illusions perdues*, and *Illusions perdues* with this Study. And, indeed, the reader's imagination will be able to work out the obscure case which at this moment was causing great uneasiness to the jury of the sessions, before whom Théodore Calvi had been tried. For a whole week, since the criminal's appeal had been rejected by the Supreme Court, Monsieur de Granville had been worrying himself over the case, and postponing from day to day the order for carrying out the sentence, so anxious was he to reassure the jury by announcing that on the threshold of death the accused had confessed the crime.

A poor widow of Nanterre, whose dwelling stood apart from the township, which is situated in the midst of the infertile plain lying between Mont-Valérien, Saint-Germain, the hills of Sartrouville, and Argenteuil, had been murdered and robbed a few days after coming into her share of an unexpected inheritance. This windfall amounted to three thousand francs, a dozen silver spoons and forks, a gold watch and chain, and some linen. Instead of depositing the three thousand francs in Paris, as she was advised by the notary of the wine-merchant who had left it her, the old woman insisted on keeping it by her. In the first place, she had never seen so much money of her own, and then she distrusted everybody in every kind of affairs, as most common and country folk do. After long discussion with a wine-merchant of Nanterre, a relation of her own and of the wine-merchant who had left her the money, the widow decided on buying an annuity, on selling her house at Nanterre, and living in the town of Saint-Germain.

The house she was living in, with a good-sized garden enclosed by a slight wooden fence, was the poor sort of dwelling usually built by small landowners in the neighbourhood of Paris. It had been hastily constructed, with no architectural design, of cement and rubble, the materials commonly used near Paris, where, as at Nanterre, they are extremely abundant, the ground being everywhere broken by quarries open to the sky. This is the ordinary hut of the civilised savage. The house consisted of a ground floor and one floor above, with garrets in the roof.

The quarryman, her deceased husband, and the builder of this dwelling had put strong iron bars to all the windows; the front door was remarkably thick. The man knew that he was alone there in the open country—and what a country! His customers were the principal master-masons in Paris, so the more important materials for his house, which stood within five hundred yards of his quarry, had been brought out in his own carts returning empty. He could choose such as suited him where houses were pulled down, and got them very cheap. Thus the window-frames, the iron-work, the doors, shutters, and wooden fittings were all derived from sanctioned pilfering, presents from his customers, and good ones, carefully chosen. Of two window-frames, he could take the better.

The house, entered from a large stable-yard, was screened from the road by a wall; the gate was of strong iron-railing. Watch-dogs were kept in the stables, and a little dog indoors at night. There was a garden of more than two acres behind.

His widow, without children, lived here with only a woman servant. The sale of the quarry had paid off the owner's debts; he had been dead about two years. This isolated house was the widow's sole possession, and she kept fowls and cows, selling the eggs and milk at Nanterre. Having no stable-boy or carter or quarrymen—her husband had made them do every kind of work—she

no longer kept up the garden ; she only gathered the few greens and roots that the stony ground allowed to grow self-sown.

The price of the house, with the money she had inherited, would amount to seven or eight thousand francs, and she could fancy herself living very happily at Saint-Germain on seven or eight hundred francs a year, which she thought she could buy with her eight thousand francs. She had had many discussions over this with the notary at Saint-Germain, for she refused to hand her money over for an annuity to the wine-merchant at Nanterre, who was anxious to have it.

Under these circumstances, then, after a certain day the widow Pigeau and her servant were seen no more. The front gate, the house door, the shutters, all were closed. At the end of three days, the police, being informed, made inquisition. Monsieur Popinot, the examining judge, and the public prosecutor arrived from Paris, and this was what they reported :—

Neither the outer gate nor the front door showed any marks of violence. The key was in the lock of the door, inside. Not a single bar had been wrenched ; the locks, shutters, and bolts were all untampered with. The walls showed no traces that could betray the passage of the criminals. The chimney-pots, of red clay, afforded no opportunity for ingress or escape, and the roofing was sound and unbroken, showing no damage by violence.

On entering the first-floor rooms, the magistrates, the gendarmes, and Bibi-Lupin found the widow Pigeau strangled in her bed and the woman strangled in hers, each by means of the bandana she wore as a nightcap. The three thousand francs were gone, with the silver-plate and the trinkets. The two bodies were decomposing, as were those of the little dog and of a large yard-dog.

The wooden palings of the garden were examined ; none were broken. The garden paths showed no trace of footsteps. The magistrate thought it probable that

the robber had walked on the grass to leave no footprints if he had come in that way ; but how could he have got into the house ? The back door to the garden had an outer guard of three iron bars, uninjured ; and there, too, the key was in the lock inside, as in the front door.

All these impossibilities having been duly noted by Monsieur Popinot, by Bibi-Lupin, who stayed there a day to examine every detail, by the public prosecutor himself, and by the sergeant of the gendarmerie at Nanterre, this murder became an agitating mystery, in which the Law and the Police were nonplussed.

This drama, published in the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, took place in the winter of 1828-29. God alone knows what excitement this puzzling crime occasioned in Paris! But Paris has a new drama to watch every morning, and forgets everything. The police, on the contrary, forgets nothing.

Three months after this fruitless inquiry, a girl of the town, whose extravagance had invited the attention of Bibi-Lupin's agents, who watched her as being the ally of several thieves, tried to persuade a woman she knew to pledge twelve silver spoons and forks and a gold watch and chain. The friend refused. This came to Bibi-Lupin's ears, and he remembered the plate and the watch and chain stolen at Nanterre. The commissioners of the Mont-de-Piété, and all the receivers of stolen goods, were warned, while Manon la Blonde was subjected to unremitting scrutiny.

It was very soon discovered that Manon la Blonde was madly in love with a young man who was never to be seen, and was supposed to be deaf to all the fair Manon's proofs of devotion. Mystery on mystery. However, this youth, under the diligent attentions of police spies, was soon seen and identified as an escaped convict, the famous hero of the Corsican vendetta, the handsome Théodore Calvi, known as Madeleine.

A man was turned on to entrap Calvi, one of those double-dealing buyers of stolen goods who serve the thieves and the police both at once; he promised to purchase the silver and the watch and chain. At the moment when the dealer of the Cour Saint-Guillaume was counting out the cash to Théodore, dressed as a woman, at half-past six in the evening, the police came in and seized Théodore and the property.

The inquiry was at once begun. On such thin evidence it was impossible to pass a sentence of death. Calvi never swerved, he never contradicted himself. He said that a country woman had sold him these objects at Argenteuil; that after buying them, the excitement over the murder committed at Nanterre had shown him the danger of keeping this plate and watch and chain in his possession, since, in fact, they were proved by the inventory made after the death of the wine merchant, the widow Pigeau's uncle, to be those that were stolen from her. Compelled at last by poverty to sell them, he said he wished to dispose of them by the intervention of a person to whom no suspicion could attach.

And nothing else could be extracted from the convict, who, by his taciturnity and firmness, contrived to insinuate that the wine-merchant at Nanterre had committed the crime, and that the woman of whom he, Théodore, had bought them was the wine-merchant's wife. The unhappy man and his wife were both taken into custody; but, after a week's imprisonment, it was amply proved that neither the husband nor the wife had been out of their house at the time. Also, Calvi failed to recognise in the wife the woman who, as he declared, had sold him the things.

As it was shown that Calvi's mistress, implicated in the case, had spent about a thousand francs since the date of the crime and the day when Calvi tried to pledge the plate and trinkets, the evidence seemed strong enough to commit Calvi and the girl for trial. This murder

being the eighteenth which Théodore had committed, he was condemned to death, for he seemed certainly to be guilty of this skilfully contrived crime Though he did not recognise the wine-merchant's wife, both she and her husband recognised him. The inquiry had proved, by the evidence of several witnesses, that Théodore had been living at Nanterre for about a month; he had worked at a mason's, his face whitened with plaster, and his clothes very shabby. At Nanterre the lad was supposed to be about eighteen years old, and for the whole month he must have been nursing that brat (*nourri ce poupon*, *i.e.* hatching the crime).

The lawyers thought he must have had accomplices. The chimney-pots were measured and compared with the size of Manon la Blonde's body to see if she could have got in that way; but a child of six could not have passed up or down those red-clay pipes, which, in modern buildings, take the place of the vast chimneys of old-fashioned houses. But for this singular and annoying difficulty, Théodore would have been executed within a week. The prison chaplain, it has been seen, could make nothing of him.

All this business, and the name of Calvi, must have escaped the notice of Jacques Collin, who, at the time, was absorbed in his single-handed struggle with Contenson, Corentin, and Peyrade. It had indeed been a point with Trompe-la-Mort to forget as far as possible his chums and all that had to do with the law courts; he dreaded a meeting which should bring him face to face with a pal who might demand an account of his boss which Collin could not possibly render.

The governor of the prison went forthwith to the public prosecutor's court, where he found the Attorney-General in conversation with Monsieur de Granville, an order for the execution in his hand. Monsieur de Granville, who had spent the whole night at the Hôtel de

Sérizy, was, in consequence of this important case, obliged to give a few hours to his duties, though overwhelmed with fatigue and grief; for the physicians could not yet promise that the Countess would recover her sanity.

After speaking a few words to the governor, Monsieur de Granville took the warrant from the attorney and placed it in Gault's hands.

'Let the matter proceed,' said he, 'unless some extraordinary circumstances should arise. Of this you must judge. I trust to your judgment. The scaffold need not be erected till half-past ten, so you still have an hour. On such an occasion hours are centuries, and many things may happen in a century. Do not allow him to think he is reprieved; prepare the man for execution if necessary; and if nothing comes of that, give Sanson the warrant at half-past nine. Let him wait!'

As the governor of the prison left the public prosecutor's room, under the archway of the passage into the hall he met Monsieur Camusot, who was going there. He exchanged a few hurried words with the examining judge; and after telling him what had been done at the Conciergerie with regard to Jacques Collin, he went on to witness the meeting of Trompe-la-Mort and Madeleine; and he did not allow the so-called priest to see the condemned criminal till Bibi-Lupin, admirably disguised as a gendarme, had taken the place of the prisoner left in charge of the young Corsican.

No words can describe the amazement of the three convicts when a warder came to fetch Jacques Collin and led him to the condemned cell! With one consent they rushed up to the chair on which Jacques Collin was sitting.

'To-day, isn't it, Monsieur?' asked Fil-de-Soie of the warder.

'Yes, Jack Ketch is waiting,' said the man with perfect indifference.

Charlot is the name by which the executioner is known

to the populace and the prison world in Paris. The nickname dates from the Revolution of 1789.

The words produced a great sensation. The prisoners looked at each other.

'It is all over with him,' the warder went on; 'the warrant has been delivered to Monsieur Gault, and the sentence has just been read to him.'

'And so the fair Madeleine has received the last sacraments?' said la Pouraille, and he swallowed a deep mouthful of air.

'Poor little Théodore!' cried le Biffon; 'he is a pretty chap too. What a pity to drop your nut' (*éternuer dans le son*) 'so young.'

The warder went towards the gate, thinking that Jacques Collin was at his heels. But the Spaniard walked very slowly, and when he was getting near to Julien he tottered and signed to la Pouraille to give him his arm.

'He is a murderer,' said Napolitas to the priest, pointing to la Pouraille, and offering his own arm.

'No, to me he is an unhappy wretch!' replied Jacques Collin, with the presence of mind and the unction of the Archbishop of Cambrai. And he drew away from Napolitas, of whom he had been very suspicious from the first. Then he said to his pals in an undertone—

'He is on the bottom step of the Abbaye de Mont-à-Regret, but I am the Prior! I will show you how well I know how to come round the beaks. I mean to snatch this boy's nut from their jaws.'

'For the sake of his breeches!' said Fil-de-Soie with a smile.

'I mean to win his soul to heaven!' replied Jacques Collin fervently, seeing some other prisoners about him. And he joined the warder at the gate.

'He got in to save Madeleine,' said Fil-de-Soie. 'We guessed rightly. What a boss he is!'

'But how can he? Jack Ketch's men are waiting. He will not even see the kid,' objected le Biffon.

'The devil is on his side!' cried la Pouraille. 'He claim our blunt! Never! He is too fond of his old chums! We are too useful to him! They wanted to make us blow the gaff, but we are not such flats! If he saves his Madeleine, I will tell him all my secrets.'

The effect of this speech was to increase the devotion of the three convicts to their boss; for at this moment he was all their hope.

Jacques Collin, in spite of Madeleine's peril, did not forget to play his part. Though he knew the Conciergerie as well as he knew the hulks in the three ports, he blundered so naturally that the warder had to tell him, 'This way, that way,' till they reached the office. There, at a glance, Jacques Collin recognised a tall, stout man leaning on the stove, with a long, red face not without distinction: it was Sanson.

'Monsieur is the chaplain?' said he, going towards him with simple cordiality.

The mistake was so shocking that it froze the bystanders.

'No, Monsieur,' said Sanson; 'I have other functions.'

Sanson, the father of the last executioner of that name—for he has recently been dismissed—was the son of the man who beheaded Louis XVI. After four centuries of hereditary office, this descendant of so many executioners had tried to repudiate the traditional burthen. The Sansons were for two hundred years executioners at Rouen before being promoted to the first rank in the kingdom, and had carried out the decrees of justice from father to son since the thirteenth century. Few families can boast of an office or of nobility handed down in a direct line during six centuries.

This young man had been captain in a cavalry regiment, and was looking forward to a brilliant military career, when his father insisted on his help in decapitating

the king. Then he made his son his deputy when, in 1793, two guillotines were in constant work—one at the Barrière du Trône, and the other in the Place de Grève. This terrible functionary, now a man of about sixty, was remarkable for his dignified air, his gentle and deliberate manners, and his entire contempt for Bibi-Lupin and his acolytes who fed the machine. The only detail which betrayed the blood of the mediæval executioner was the formidable breadth and thickness of his hands. Well informed too, caring greatly for his position as a citizen and an elector, and an enthusiastic florist, this tall, brawny man with his low voice, his calm reserve, his few words, and a high bald forehead, was like an English nobleman rather than an executioner. And a Spanish priest would certainly have fallen into the mistake which Jacques Collin had intentionally made.

'He is no convict!' said the head warder to the governor.

'I begin to think so too,' replied Monsieur Gault, with a nod to that official.

Jacques Collin was led to the cellar-like room where Théodore Calvi, in a strait waistcoat, was sitting on the edge of the wretched camp bed. Trompe-la-Mort, under a transient gleam of light from the passage, at once recognised Bibi-Lupin in the gendarme who stood leaning on his sword.

'Io sono Gaba-Morto. Parla nostro Italiano,' said Jacques Collin very rapidly. 'Vengo ti salvar.'

'I am Trompe-la-Mort. Talk our Italian. I have come to save you.'

All the two chums wanted to say had, of course, to be incomprehensible to the pretended gendarme; and as Bibi-Lupin was left in charge of the prisoner, he could not leave his post. The man's fury was quite indescribable.

Théodore Calvi, a young man with a pale olive complexion, light hair, and hollow, dull, blue eyes, well built, hiding prodigious strength under the lym-

phatic appearance that is not uncommon in Southerners, would have had a charming face but for the strongly-arched eyebrows and low forehead that gave him a sinister expression, scarlet lips of savage cruelty, and a twitching of the muscles peculiar to Corsicans, denoting that excessive irritability which makes them so prompt to kill in any sudden squabble.

Théodore, startled at the sound of that voice, raised his head, and at first thought himself the victim of a delusion ; but as the experience of two months had accustomed him to the darkness of this stone box, he looked at the sham priest, and sighed deeply. He did not recognise Jacques Collin, whose face, scarred by the application of sulphuric acid, was not that of his old boss.

'It is really your Jacques ; I am your confessor, and have come to get you off. Do not be such a ninny as to know me ; and speak as if you were making a confession.' He spoke with the utmost rapidity. 'This young fellow is very much depressed ; he is afraid to die, he will confess everything,' said Jacques Collin, addressing the gendarme.

Bibi-Lupin dared not say a word for fear of being recognised.

'Say something to show me that you are he ; you have nothing but his voice,' said Théodore.

'You see, poor boy, he assures me that he is innocent,' said Jacques Collin to Bibi-Lupin, who dared not speak for fear of being recognised.

'*Sempre mi*,' said Jacques, returning close to Théodore, and speaking the word in his ear.

'*Sempre ti*,' replied Théodore, giving the counter sign. 'Yes you are the boss——'

'Did you do the trick ?'

'Yes.'

'Tell me the whole story, that I may see what can be done to save you ; make haste, Jack Ketch is waiting.'



The Corsican at once knelt down and pretended to be about to confess.

Bibi-Lupin did not know what to do, for the conversation was so rapid that it hardly took as much time as it does to read it. Théodore hastily told all the details of the crime, of which Jacques Collin knew nothing.

'The jury gave their verdict without proof,' he said finally.

'Child! you want to argue when they are waiting to cut off your hair——'

'But I might have been sent to spout the wedge.—And that is the way they judge you!—and in Paris too!'

'But how did you do the job?' asked Trompe-la-Mort.

'Ah! there you are.—Since I saw you I made acquaintance with a girl, a Corsican, I met when I came to Paris.'

'Men who are such fools as to love a woman,' cried Jacques Collin, 'always come to grief that way. They are tigers on the loose, tigers who blab and look at themselves in the glass.—You were a gaby.'

'But——'

'Well, what good did she do you—that curse of a moll?'

'That duck of a girl—no taller than a bundle of firewood, as slippery as an eel, and as nimble as a monkey—got in at the top of the oven, and opened the front door. The dogs were well crammed with balls, and as dead as herrings. I settled the two women. Then when I got the swag, Ginetta locked the door and got out again by the oven.'

'Such a clever dodge deserves life,' said Jacques Collin, admiring the execution of the crime as a sculptor admires the modelling of a figure.

'And I was fool enough to waste all that cleverness for a thousand crowns!'

'No, for a woman,' replied Jacques Collin. 'I tell

you, they deprive us of all our wits,' and Jacques Collin eyed Théodore with a flashing glance of contempt.

'But you were not there!' said the Corsican; 'I was all alone——'

'And do you love the slut?' asked Jacques Collin, feeling that the reproach was a just one.

'Oh! I want to live, but it is for you now rather than for her.'

'Be quite easy, I am not called Trompe-la-Mort for nothing. I undertake the case.'

'What! life?' cried the lad, lifting his swaddled hands towards the damp vault of the cell.

'My little Madeleine, prepare to be lagged for life (penal servitude),' replied Jacques Collin. 'You can expect no less; they won't crown you with roses like a fatted ox. When they first set us down for Rochefort, it was because they wanted to be rid of us! But if I can get you ticketed for Toulon, you can get out and come back to Pantin (Paris), where I will find you a tidy way of living.'

A sigh such as had rarely been heard under that inexorable roof struck the stones, which sent back the sound that has no fellow in music, to the ear of the astounded Bibi-Lupin.

'It is the effect of the absolution I promised him in return for his revelations,' said Jacques Collin to the gendarme. 'These Corsicans, Monsieur, are full of faith! But he is as innocent as the Immaculate Babe, and I mean to try to save him.'

'God bless you, Monsieur l'Abbé!' said Théodore in French.

Trompe-la-Mort, more Carlos Herrera, more the canon than ever, left the condemned cell, rushed back to the hall, and appeared before Monsieur Gault in affected horror.

'Indeed, sir, the young man is innocent; he has told

me who the guilty person is! He was ready to die for a false point of honour—he is a Corsican! Go and beg the public prosecutor to grant me five minutes' interview. Monsieur de Granville cannot refuse to listen at once to a Spanish priest who is suffering so cruelly from the blunders of the French police.'

'I will go,' said Monsieur Gault, to the extreme astonishment of all the witnesses of this extraordinary scene.

'And meanwhile,' said Jacques, 'send me back to the prison-yard where I may finish the conversion of a criminal whose heart I have touched already—they have hearts, these people!'

This speech produced a sensation in all who heard it. The gendarmes, the registry clerk, Sanson, the warders, the executioner's assistant—all awaiting orders to go aud get the scaffold ready—to rig up the machine, in prison slang—all these people, usually so indifferent, were agitated by very natural curiosity.

Just then the rattle of a carriage with high-stepping horses was heard; it stopped very suggestively at the gate of the Conciergerie on the quay. The door was opened, and the step let down in such haste, that every one supposed that some great personage had arrived. Presently a lady waving a sheet of blue paper came forward to the outer gate of the prison, followed by a footman and *a chasseur*. Dressed very handsomely, and all in black, with a veil over her bonnet, she was wiping her eyes with a floridly embroidered handkerchief.

Jacques Collin at once recognised Asie, or, to give the woman her true name, Jacqueline Collin, his aunt. This horrible old woman—worthy of her nephew—whose thoughts were all centred in the prisoner, and who was defending him with intelligence and mother-wit that were a match for the powers of the law, had a permit made out the evening before in the name of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse's waiting-maid by the request of Monsieur

de Sérizy, allowing her to see Lucien de Rubempré, and the Abbé Carlos Herrera so soon as he should be brought out of the secret cells. On this the Colonel, who was the Governor-in-Chief of all the prisons, had written a few words, and the mere colour of the paper revealed powerful influences; for these permits, like theatre-tickets, differ in shape and appearance.

So the turnkey hastened to open the gate, especially when he saw the *chasseur* with his plumes and an uniform of green and gold as dazzling as a Russian General's, proclaiming a lady of aristocratic rank and almost royal birth.

'Oh, my dear Abbé!' exclaimed this fine lady, shedding a torrent of tears at the sight of the priest, 'how could any one ever think of putting such a saintly man in here, even by mistake?'

The Governor took the permit and read, 'Introduced by His Excellency the Comte de Sérizy.'

'Ah! Madame de San-Esteban, Madame la Marquise,' cried Carlos Herrera, 'what admirable devotion!'

'But, Madame, such interviews are against the rules,' said the good old Governor. And he intercepted the advance of this bale of black watered-silk and lace.

'But at such a distance!' said Jacques Collin, and in your presence——' and he looked round at the group.

His aunt, whose dress might well dazzle the clerk, the Governor, the warders, and the gendarmes, stank of musk. She had on, besides a thousand crowns worth of lace, a black India cashmere shawl, worth six thousand francs. And her *chasseur* was marching up and down outside with the insolence of a lackey who knows that he is essential to an exacting princess. He spoke never a word to the footman, who stood by the gate on the quay, which is always open by day.

'What do you wish? What can I do?' said Madame de San-Esteban in the lingo agreed upon by this aunt and nephew.

This dialect consisted in adding terminations in *ar* or in *or*, in *al* or in *i* to every word, whether French or slang, so as to disguise it by lengthening it. It was a diplomatic cypher adapted to speech.

'Put all the letters in some safe place; take out those that are most likely to compromise the ladies; come back, dressed very poorly, to the Salle des Pas-Perdus, and wait for my orders.'

Asie, otherwise Jacqueline, knelt as if to receive his blessing, and the sham priest blessed his aunt with evangelical unction.

'*Addio*, *Marchesa*,' said he aloud. 'And,' he added in their private language, 'find Europe and Paccard with the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs they bagged. We must have them.'

'Paccard is out there,' said the pious Marquise, pointing to the *chasseur*, her eyes full of tears.

This intuitive comprehension brought not merely a smile to the man's lips, but a gesture of surprise; no one could astonish him but his aunt. The sham Marquise turned to the bystanders with the air of a woman accustomed to give herself airs.

'He is in despair at being unable to attend his son's funeral,' said she in broken French, 'for this monstrous miscarriage of justice has betrayed the saintly man's secret.—I am going to the funeral mass.—Here, Monsieur,' she added to the Governor, handing him a purse of gold, 'this is to give your poor prisoners some comforts.'

'What slap-up style!' her nephew whispered in approval.

Jacques Collin then followed the warder, who led him back to the yard.

Bibi-Lupin, quite desperate, had at last caught the eye of a real gendarme, to whom, since Jacques Collin had gone, he had been addressing significant '*Ahems*,' and who took his place on guard in the condemned cell.

But Trompe-la-Mort's sworn foe was released too late to see the great lady, who drove off in her dashing turn-out, and whose voice, though disguised, fell on his ear with a vicious twang.

'Three hundred shiners for the boarders,' said the head warder, showing Bibi-Lupin the purse, which Monsieur Gault had handed over to his clerk.

'Let's see, Monsieur Jacomety,' said Bibi-Lupin.

The police agent took the purse, poured out the money into his hand, and examined it curiously.

'Yes, it is gold, sure enough!' said he, 'and a coat-of-arms on the purse! The scoundrel! How clever he is! What an all-round villain! He does us all brown——and all the time! He ought to be shot down like a dog!'

'Why, what's the matter?' asked the clerk, taking back the money.

'The matter! Why, the hussy stole it!' cried Bibi-Lupin, stamping with rage on the flags of the gateway.

The words produced a great sensation among the spectators, who were standing at a little distance from Monsieur Sanson. He, too, was still standing, his back against the large stove in the middle of the vaulted hall, awaiting the order to crop the felon's hair and erect the scaffold on the Place de Grève.

On re-entering the yard, Jacques Collin went towards his chums at a pace suited to a frequenter of the galleys.

'What have you on your mind?' said he to la Pouraille.

'My game is up,' said the man, whom Jacques Collin led into a corner. 'What I want now is a pal I can trust.'

'What for?'

La Pouraille, after telling the tale of all his crimes, but in thieves' slang, gave an account of the murder and robbery of the two Crottats.

'You have my respect,' said Jacques Collin. 'The

job was well done; but you seem to me to have blundered afterwards.'

'In what way?'

'Well, having done the trick, you ought to have had a Russian passport, have made up as a Russian prince, bought a fine coach with a coat-of-arms on it, have boldly deposited your money in a bank, have got a letter of credit on Hamburg, and then have set out posting to Hamburg with a valet, a ladies' maid, and your mistress disguised as a Russian princess. At Hamburg you should have sailed for Mexico. A chap of spirit, with two hundred and eighty thousand francs in gold, ought to be able to do what he pleases and go where he pleases, flathead!'

'Oh yes, you have such notions because you are the boss. Your nut is always square on your shoulders—but I——'

'In short, a word of good advice in your position is like broth to a dead man,' said Jacques Collin, with a serpent-like gaze at his old pal.

'True enough!' said la Pouraille, looking dubious. 'But give me the broth, all the same. If it does not suit my stomach, I can warm my feet in it——'

'Here you are nabbed by the Justice, with five robberies and three murders, the latest of them those of two rich and respectable folks. . . . Now, juries do not like to see respectable folks killed. You will be put through the machine, and there is not a chance for you.'

'I have heard all that,' said la Pouraille lamentably.

'My aunt Jacqueline, with whom I have just exchanged a few words in the office, and who is, as you know, a mother to the pals, told me that the authorities mean to be quit of you; they are so much afraid of you.'

'But I am rich now,' said la Pouraille, with a simplicity which showed how convinced a thief is of his natural right to steal. 'What are they afraid of?'

'We have no time for philosophising,' said Jacques Collin. 'To come back to you——'

'What do you want to do with me?' said la Pouraille, interrupting his boss.

'You shall see. A dead dog is still worth something.'

'To other people,' said la Pouraille.

'I take you into my game!' said Jacques Collin.

'Well, that is something,' said the murderer. 'What next?'

'I do not ask you where your money is, but what you mean to do with it?'

La Pouraille looked into the convict's impenetrable eye, and Jacques coldly went on: 'Have you a trip you are sweet upon, or a child, or a pal to be helped? I shall be outside within an hour, and I can do much for any one you want to be good-natured to.'

La Pouraille still hesitated; he was delaying with indecision. Jacques Collin produced a clinching argument.

'Your whack of our money would be thirty thousand francs. Do you leave it to the pals? Do you bequeath it to anybody? Your share is safe; I can give it this evening to any one you leave it to.'

The murderer gave a little start of satisfaction.

'I have him!' said Jacques Collin to himself. 'But we have no time to play. Consider,' he went on in la Pouraille's ear, 'we have not ten minutes to spare, old chap; the public prosecutor is to send for me, and I am to have a talk with him. I have him safe, and can ring the old boss's neck. I am certain I shall save Madeleine.'

'If you save Madeleine, my good boss, you can just as easily——'

'Don't waste your spittle,' said Jacques Collin shortly. 'Make your will.'

'Well, then—I want to leave the money to la Gonore,' replied la Pouraille piteously.

'What! Are you living with Moses' widow—the

Jew who led the swindling gang in the South?' asked Jacques Collin.

For Trompe-la-Mort, like a great general, knew the person of every one in his army.

'That's the woman,' said la Pouraille, much flattered.

'A pretty woman,' said Jacques Collin, who knew exactly how to manage his dreadful tools. 'The moll is a beauty; she is well informed, and stands by her mates, and a first-rate hand. Yes, la Gonore has made a new man of you! What a flat you must be to risk your nut when you have a trip like her at home! You noodle; you should have set up some respectable little shop and lived quietly.—And what does she do?'

'She is settled in the Rue Sainte-Barbe, managing a house——'

'And she is to be your legatee? Ah, my dear boy, this is what such sluts bring us to when we are such fools as to love them.'

'Yes, but don't give her anything till I am done for.'

'It is a sacred trust,' said Jacques Collin very seriously.

'And nothing to the pals?'

'Nothing! They blowed the gaff for me,' answered la Pouraille vindictively.

'Who did? Shall I serve 'em out?' asked Jacques Collin eagerly, trying to rouse the last sentiment that survives in these souls till the last hour. 'Who knows, old pal, but I might at the same time do them a bad turn and serve you with the public prosecutor?'

The murderer looked at his boss with amazed satisfaction.

'At this moment,' the boss replied to this expressive look, 'I am playing the game only for Théodore. When this farce is played out, old boy, I might do wonders for a chum—for you are a chum of mine.'

'If I see that you really can put off the engagement for that poor little Théodore, I will do anything you choose—there!'

'But the trick is done. I am sure to save his head. If you want to get out of the scrape, you see, la Pouraille, you must be ready to do a good turn—we can do nothing single-handed——'

'That's true,' said the felon.

His confidence was so strong, and his faith in the boss so fanatical, that he no longer hesitated. La Pouraille revealed the names of his accomplices, a secret hitherto well kept. This was all Jacques needed to know.

'That is the whole story. Ruffard was the third in the job with me and Godet——'

'Arrache-Laine?' cried Jacques Collin, giving Ruffard his nickname among the gang.

'That's the man.—And the blackguards peached because I knew where they had hidden their whack, and they did not know where mine was.'

'You are making it all easy, my cherub!' said Jacques Collin.

'What?'

'Well,' replied the master, 'you see how wise it is to trust me entirely. Your revenge is now part of the hand I am playing.—I do not ask you to tell me where the dibs are, you can tell me at the last moment; but tell me all about Ruffard and Godet.'

'You are, and you always will be, our boss; I have no secrets from you,' replied la Pouraille. 'My money is in the cellar at la Gonore's.'

'And you are not afraid of her telling?'

'Why, get along! She knows nothing about my little game!' replied la Pouraille. 'I made her drunk, though she is of the sort that would never blab even with her head under the knife.—But such a lot of gold——!'

'Yes, that turns the milk of the purest conscience,' replied Jacques Collin.

'So I could do the job with no peepers to spy me. All the chickens were gone to roost. The shiners are

three feet underground behind some wine-bottles. And I spread some stones and mortar over them.'

'Good,' said Jacques Collin. 'And the others?'

'Ruffard's pieces are with la Gonore in the poor woman's bedroom, and he has her tight by that, for she might be nabbed as accessory after the fact, and end her days in Saint-Lazare.'

'The villain! The reelers teach a thief what's what,' said Jacques.

'Godet left his pieces at his sister's, a washerwoman; honest girl, she may be caught for five years in La Force without dreaming of it. The pal raised the tiles of the floor, put them back again, and guyed.'

'Now, do you know what I want you to do?' said Jacques Collin, with a magnetising gaze at la Pouraille.

'What?'

'I want you to take Madeleine's job on your shoulders.'

La Pouraille started queerly; but he at once recovered himself and stood at attention under the boss's eye.

'So you shy at that? You dare to spoil my game? Come, now! Four murders or three. Does it not come to the same thing?'

'Perhaps.'

'By the God of good-fellowship, there is no blood in your veins! And I was thinking of saving you!'

'How?'

'Idiot, if we promise to give the money back to the family, you will only be lagged for life. I would not give a piece for your nut if we keep the blunt, but at this moment you are worth seven hundred thousand francs, you flat.'

'Good for you, boss!' cried la Pouraille in great glee.

'And then,' said Jacques Collin, 'besides casting all the murders on Ruffard—Bibi-Lupin will be finely sold. I have him this time.'

La Pouraille was speechless at this suggestion; his eyes grew round, and he stood like an image.

He had been three months in custody, and was committed for trial, and his chums at La Force, to whom he had never mentioned his accomplices, had given him such small comfort, that he was entirely hopeless after his examination, and this simple expedient had been quite overlooked by these prison-ridden minds. This semblance of a hope almost stupefied his brain.

'Have Ruffard and Godet had their spree yet? Have they forked out any of the yellow boys?' asked Jacques Collin.

'They dare not,' replied la Pouraille. 'The wretches are waiting till I am turned off. That is what my moll sent me word by la Biffe when she came to see le Biffon.'

'Very well; we will have their whack of the money in twenty-four hours,' said Jacques Collin. 'Then the blackguards cannot pay up, as you will; you will come out as white as snow, and they will be red with all that blood! By my kind offices you will seem a good sort of fellow led away by them. I shall have money enough of yours to prove *alibis* on the other counts, and when you are back on the hulks—for you are bound to go there—you must see about escaping. It is a dog's life, still it is life!'

La Pouraille's eyes glittered with suppressed delirium.

'With seven hundred thousand francs you can get a good many drinks,' said Jacques Collin, making his pal quite drunk with hope.

'Ay, ay, boss!'

'I can bamboozle the Minister of Justice.—Ah, ha! Ruffard will shell out to do for a reeler. Bibi-Lupin is fairly gulled!'

'Very good, it is a bargain,' said la Pouraille with savage glee. 'You order, and I obey.'

And he hugged Jacques Collin in his arms, while tears of joy stood in his eyes, so hopeful did he feel of saving his head.

'That is not all,' said Jacques Collin; 'the public prosecutor does not swallow everything, you know, especially when a new count is entered against you. The next thing is to bring a moll into the case by blowing the gaff.'

'But how, and what for?'

'Do as I bid you; you will see.' And Trompe-la-Mort briefly told the secret of the Nanterre murders, showing him how necessary it was to find a woman who would pretend to be Ginetta. Then he and la Pouraille, now in good spirits, went across to le Biffon.

'I know how sweet you are on la Biffe,' said Jacques Collin to this man.

The expression in le Biffon's eyes was a horrible poem.

'What will she do while you are on the hulks?'

A tear sparkled in le Biffon's fierce eyes.

'Well, suppose I were to get her lodgings in the *Lorcefé des Largues*' (the women's La Force, *i.e.* les Madelonnettes or Saint-Lazare) 'for a stretch, allowing that time for you to be sentenced and sent there, to arrive and to escape?'

'Even you cannot work such a miracle. She took no part in the job,' replied la Biffe's partner.

'Oh, my good Biffon,' said la Pouraille, 'our boss is more powerful than God A'mighty.'

'What is your password for her?' asked Jacques Collin, with the assurance of a master to whom nothing can be refused.

'*Sorgue à Pantin*' (night in Paris). 'If you say that she knows you have come from me, and if you want her to do as you bid her, show her a five-franc piece and say *Tondif*.'

'She will be involved in the sentence on la Pouraille, and let off with a year in quod for *snitching*,' said Jacques Collin, looking at la Pouraille.

La Pouraille understood his boss's scheme, and by a

single look promised to persuade le Biffon to promote it by inducing la Biffe to take upon herself this complicity in the crime la Pouraille was prepared to confess.

'Farewell, my children. You will presently hear that I have saved my boy from Jack Ketch,' said Trompe-la-Mort. 'Yes, Jack Ketch and his hairdresser were waiting in the office to get Madeleine ready.—There,' he added, 'they have come to fetch me to go to the public prosecutor.'

'And, in fact, a warder came out of the gate and beckoned to this extraordinary man, who, in face of the young Corsican's danger, had recovered the savage power which enabled him to hold his own against society.

It is worthy of note that at the moment when Lucien's body was taken away from him, Jacques Collin had, with a crowning effort, made up his mind to attempt a last incarnation, not as a human being, but as a *thing*. He had at last taken the fateful step that Napoleon took on board the boat which conveyed him to the *Bellerophon*. And a strange concurrence of events aided this genius of evil and corruption in his undertaking.

But though the unlooked-for conclusion of this life of crime may perhaps be deprived of some of the marvellous effect which, in our day, can be given to a narrative only by incredible improbabilities, it is necessary, before we accompany Jacques Collin to the public prosecutor's room, that we should follow Madame Camusot in her visits during the time we have spent in the Conciergerie.

One of the obligations which the historian of manners must unfailingly observe is that of never marring the truth for the sake of dramatic arrangement, especially when the truth is so kind as to be in itself romantic. Social nature, particularly in Paris, allows of such freaks of chance, such complications of whimsical entanglements, that it constantly outdoes the most inventive

imagination. The audacity of facts, by sheer improbability or indecorum, rises to heights of 'situation' forbidden to art, unless they are softened, cleansed, and purified by the writer.

Madame Camusot did her utmost to dress herself for the morning almost in good taste—a difficult task for the wife of a judge who for six years has lived in a provincial town. Her object was to give no hold for criticism to the Marquise d'Espard or the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, in a call so early as between eight and nine in the morning. Amélie Cécile Camusot, *née* Thirion, it must be said, only half succeeded; and in a matter of dress is not this a twofold blunder?

Few people can imagine how useful the women of Paris are to ambitious men of every class; they are equally necessary in the world of fashion and the world of thieves, where, as we have seen, they fill a most important part. For instance, suppose that a man, not to find himself left in the lurch, must absolutely get speech within a given time with the high functionary who was of such immense importance under the Restoration, and who is to this day called the Keeper of the Seals—a man, let us say, in the most favourable position, a judge, that is to say, a man familiar with the way of things. He is compelled to seek out the presiding judge of a circuit, or some private or official secretary, and prove to him his need of an immediate interview. But is a Keeper of the Seals ever visible 'that very minute'? In the middle of the day, if he is not at the Chamber, he is at the Privy Council, or signing papers, or hearing a case. In the early morning he is out, no one knows where. In the evening he has public and private engagements. If every magistrate could claim a moment's interview under any pretext that might occur to him, the Supreme Judge would be besieged.

The purpose of a private and immediate interview is therefore submitted to the judgment of one of those

mediatory potentates who are but an obstacle to be removed, a door that can be unlocked, so long as it is not held by a rival. A woman at once goes to another woman; she can get straight into her bedroom if she can arouse the curiosity of mistress or maid, especially if the mistress is under the stress of a strong interest or pressing necessity.

Call this female potentate Madame la Marquise d'Espard, with whom a Minister has to come to terms; this woman writes a little scented note, which her man-servant carries to the Minister's man-servant. The note greets the Minister on his waking, and he reads it at once. Though the Minister has business to attend to, the man is enchanted to have a reason for calling on one of the Queens of Paris, one of the Powers of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, one of the favourites of the Dauphiness, of MADAME, or of the King. Casimir Périer, the only real statesman of the Revolution of July, would leave anything to call on a retired Gentleman of the Bedchamber to King Charles X.

This theory accounts for the magical effect of the words:—

'Madame,—Madame Camusot, on very important business, which she says you know of,' spoken in Madame d'Espard's ear by her maid, who thought she was awake.

And the Marquise desired that Amélie should be shown in at once.

The magistrate's wife was attentively heard when she began with these words:—

'Madame la Marquise, we have ruined ourselves by trying to avenge you——'

'How is that, my dear?' replied the Marquise, looking at Madame Camusot in the dim light that fell through the half-open door. 'You are vastly sweet this morning in that little bonnet. Where do you get that shape?'

'You are very kind, Madame.—Well, you know that Camusot's way of examining Lucien de Rubempré drove

the young man to despair, and he hanged himself in prison.'

'Oh, what will become of Madame de Sérizy?' cried the Marquise, affecting ignorance, that she might hear the whole story once more.

'Alas! they say she is quite mad,' said Amélie. 'If you could only persuade the Lord Keeper to send for my husband this minute, by special messenger, to meet him at the Palais, the Minister would hear some strange mysteries, and report them, no doubt, to the King. . . . Then Camusot's enemies would be reduced to silence.'

'But who are Camusot's enemies?' asked Madame d'Espard.

'The public prosecutor, and now Monsieur de Sérizy.'

'Very good, my dear,' replied Madame d'Espard, who owed to Monsieur de Granville and the Comte de Sérizy her defeat in the disgraceful proceedings by which she had tried to have her husband treated as a lunatic, 'I will protect you; I never forget either my foes or my friends.'

She rang; the maid drew open the curtains, and daylight flooded the room; she asked for her desk, and the maid brought it in. The Marquise hastily scrawled a few lines.

'Tell Godard to go on horseback, and carry this note to the Chancellor's office.—There is no reply,' said she to the maid.

The woman went out of the room quickly, but, in spite of the order, remained at the door for some minutes.

'There are great mysteries going forward then?' asked Madame d'Espard. 'Tell me all about it, dear child. Has Clotilde de Grandlieu put a finger in the pie?'

'You will know everything from the Lord Keeper, for my husband has told me nothing. He only told me he was in danger. It would be better for us that

Madame de Sérizy should die than that she should remain mad.'

'Poor woman!' said the Marquise. 'But was she not mad already?'

Women of the world, by a hundred ways of pronouncing the same phrase, illustrate to attentive hearers the infinite variety of musical modes. The soul goes out into the voice as it does into the eyes; it vibrates in light and in air—the elements acted on by the eyes and voice. By the tone she gave to the two words, 'Poor woman!' the Marquise betrayed the joy of satisfied hatred, the pleasure of triumph. Oh! what woes did she not wish to befall Lucien's protectress. Revenge, which nothing can assuage, which can survive the person hated, fills us with dark terrors. And Madame Camusot, though harsh herself, vindictive, and quarrelsome, was overwhelmed. She could find nothing to say, and was silent.

'Diane told me that Léontine went to the prison,' Madame d'Espard went on. 'The dear Duchess is in despair at such a scandal, for she is so foolish as to be very fond of Madame de Sérizy; however, it is comprehensible: they both adored that little fool Lucien at about the same time, and nothing so effectually binds or severs two women as worshipping at the same altar. And our dear friend spent two hours yesterday in Léontine's room. The poor Countess, it seems, says dreadful things! I heard that it was disgusting! A woman of rank ought not to give way to such attacks.—Bah! A purely physical passion.—The Duchess came to see me as pale as death; she really was very brave. There are monstrous things connected with this business.'

'My husband will tell the Keeper of the Seals all he knows for his own justification, for they wanted to save Lucien, and he, Madame la Marquise, did his duty. An examining judge always has to question people in private at the time fixed by law! He had to ask the poor little

wretch something, if only for form's sake, and the young fellow did not understand, and confessed things——'

'He was an impertinent fool!' said Madame d'Espard in a hard tone.

The judge's wife kept silence on hearing this sentence.

'Though we failed in the matter of the Commission in Lunacy, it was not Camusot's fault, I shall never forget that,' said the Marquise after a pause. 'It was Lucien, Monsieur de Sérizy, Monsieur de Bauvan, and Monsieur de Granville who overthrew us. With time God will be on my side; all those people will come to grief.—Be quite easy, I will send the Chevalier d'Espard to the Keeper of the Seals that he may desire your husband's presence immediately, if that is of any use.'

'Oh! Madame——'

'Listen,' said the Marquise. 'I promise you the ribbon of the Legion of Honour at once—to-morrow. It will be a conspicuous testimonial of satisfaction with your conduct in this affair. Yes, it implies further blame on Lucien; it will prove him guilty. Men do not commonly hang themselves for the pleasure of it.—Now, good-bye, my pretty dear——'

Ten minutes later Madame Camusot was in the bedroom of the beautiful Diane de Maufrigneuse, who had not gone to bed till one, and at nine o'clock had not yet slept.

However insensible duchesses may be, even these women, whose hearts are of stone, cannot see a friend a victim to madness without being painfully impressed by it.

And besides, the connection between Diane and Lucien, though at an end now eighteen months since, had left such memories with the Duchess that the poor boy's disastrous end had been to her also a fearful blow. All night Diane had seen visions of the beautiful youth, so charming, so poetical, who had been so delightful a

lover—painted as Léontine depicted him, with the vividness of wild delirium. She had letters from Lucien that she had kept, intoxicating letters worthy to compare with Mirabeau's to Sophie, but more literary, more elaborate, for Lucien's letters had been dictated by the most powerful of passions—Vanity. Having the most bewitching of duchesses for his mistress, and seeing her commit any folly for him—secret follies, of course—had turned Lucien's head with happiness. The lover's pride had inspired the poet. And the Duchess had treasured these touching letters, as some old men keep indecent prints, for the sake of their extravagant praise of all that was least duchess-like in her nature.

'And he died in a squalid prison!' cried she to herself, putting the letters away in a panic when she heard her maid knocking gently at her door.

'Madame Camusot,' said the woman, 'on business of the greatest importance to you, Madame la Duchesse.'

Diane sprang to her feet in terror.

'Oh!' cried she, looking at Amélie, who had assumed a duly condoling air, 'I guess it all—my letters! It is about my letters. Oh! my letters, my letters!'

She sank on to a couch. She remembered now how, in the extravagance of her passion, she had answered Lucien in the same vein, had lauded the man's poetry as he had sung the charms of the woman, and in what a strain!

'Alas, yes, Madame, I have come to save what is dearer to you than life—your honour. Compose yourself and get dressed, we must go to the Duchesse de Grandlieu; happily for you, you are not the only person compromised.'

'But at the Palais, yesterday, Léontine burnt, I am told, all the letters found at poor Lucien's.'

'But, Madame, behind Lucien there was Jacques Collin!' cried the magistrate's wife. 'You always forget that horrible companionship which, beyond question,

led to that charming and lamented young man's end. That Machiavelli of the galleys never loses his head! Monsieur Camusot is convinced that the wretch has in some safe hiding-place all the most compromising letters written by you ladies to his——'

'His friend,' the Duchess hastily put in. 'You are right, my child. We must hold council at the Grandlieus'. We are all concerned in this matter, and Sérizy happily will lend us his aid.'

Extreme peril—as we have observed in the scenes in the Conciergerie—has a hold over the soul not less terrible than that of powerful re-agents over the body. It is a mental Voltaic battery. The day, perhaps, is not far off when the process shall be discovered by which feeling is chemically converted into a fluid not unlike the electric fluid.

The phenomena were the same in the convict and the Duchess. This crushed, half-dying woman, who had not slept, who was so particular over her dressing, had recovered the strength of a lioness at bay, and the presence of mind of a general under fire. Diane chose her gown and got through her dressing with the alacrity of a grisette who is her own waiting-woman. It was so astounding, that the ladies'-maid stood for a moment stock-still, so greatly was she surprised to see her mistress in her shift, not ill pleased perhaps to let the judge's wife discern through the thin cloud of lawn a form as white and as perfect as that of Canova's Venus. It was like a gem in a fold of tissue paper. Diane suddenly remembered where a pair of stays had been put that fastened in front, sparing a woman in a hurry the ill-spent time and fatigue of being laced. She had arranged the lace trimming of her shift and the fulness of the bosom by the time the maid had fetched her petticoat, and crowned the work by putting on her gown. While Amélie, at a sign from the maid, hooked the bodice behind, the woman brought out a pair of thread stockings, velvet

boots, a shawl, and a bonnet. Amélie and the maid each drew on a stocking.

'You are the loveliest creature I ever saw!' said Amélie, insidiously kissing Diane's elegant and polished knee with an eager impulse.

'Madame has not her match!' cried the maid.

'There, there, Josette, hold your tongue,' replied the Duchess.—'Have you a carriage?' she went on, to Madame Camusot. 'Then come along, my dear, we can talk on the road.'

And the Duchess ran down the great stairs of the Hôtel de Cadignan, putting on her gloves as she went—a thing she had never been known to do.

'To the Hôtel de Grandlieu, and drive fast,' said she to one of her men, signing to him to get up behind.

The footman hesitated—it was a hackney coach.

'Ah! Madame la Duchesse, you never told me that the young man had letters of yours. Otherwise Camusot would have proceeded differently . . .'

'Léontine's state so occupied my thoughts that I forgot myself entirely. The poor woman was almost crazy the day before yesterday; imagine the effect on her of this tragical termination. If you could only know, child, what a morning we went through yesterday! It is enough to make one forswear love!—Yesterday Léontine and I were dragged across Paris by a horrible old woman, an old-clothes buyer, a domineering creature, to that stinking and blood-stained sty they call the Palace of Justice, and I said to her as I took her there: "Is not this enough to make us fall on our knees and cry out like Madame de Nucingen, when she went through one of those awful Mediterranean storms on her way to Naples, 'Dear God, save me this time, and never again——!"

'These two days will certainly have shortened my life.—What fools we are ever to write!—But love prompts us; we receive pages that fire the heart through

the eyes, and everything is in a blaze! Prudence deserts us—we reply——'

'But why reply when you can act?' said Madame Camusot.

'It is grand to lose oneself utterly!' cried the Duchess with pride. 'It is the luxury of the soul.'

'Beautiful women are excusable,' said Madame Camusot modestly. 'They have more opportunities of falling than we have.'

The Duchess smiled.

'We are always too generous,' said Diane de Maufrigneuse. 'I shall do just like that odious Madame d'Espard.'

'And what does she do?' asked the judge's wife, very curious.

'She has written a thousand love-notes——'

'So many!' exclaimed Amélie, interrupting the Duchess.

'Well, my dear, and not a word that could compromise her is to be found in any one of them.'

'You would be incapable of maintaining such coldness, such caution,' said Madame Camusot. 'You are a woman; you are one of those angels who cannot stand out against the devil——'

'I have made a vow to write no more letters. I never in my life wrote to anybody but that unhappy Lucien.—I will keep his letters to my dying day! My dear child, they are fire, and sometimes we want——'

'But if they were found!' said Amélie, with a little shocked expression.

'Oh! I should say they were part of a romance I was writing; for I have copied them all, my dear, and burnt the originals.'

'Oh, Madame, as a reward allow me to read them.'

'Perhaps, child,' said the Duchess. 'And then you will see that he did not write such letters as those to Léontine.'

This speech was woman all the world over, of every age and every land.

Madame Camusot, like the frog in la Fontaine's fable, was ready to burst her skin with the joy of going to the Grandlieus' in the society of the beautiful Diane de Maufrigneuse. This morning she would forge one of the links that are so needful to ambition. She could already hear herself addressed as Madame la Présidente. She felt the ineffable gladness of triumphing over stupendous obstacles, of which the greatest was her husband's ineptitude, as yet unrevealed, but to her well known. To win success for a second-rate man! This is to a woman—as to a king—the delight which tempts great actors when they act a bad play a hundred times over. It is the very drunkenness of egoism. It is in a way the Saturnalia of power.

Power can prove itself to itself only by the strange misapplication which leads it to crown some absurd person with the laurels of success while insulting genius—the only stronghold which power cannot touch. The knighting of Caligula's horse, an imperial farce, has been, and always will be, a favourite performance.

In a few minutes Diane and Amélie had exchanged the elegant disorder of the fair Diane's bedroom for the severe but dignified and splendid austerity of the Duchesse de Grandlieu's rooms.

She, a Portuguese, and very pious, always rose at eight to attend mass at the little church of Sainte-Valère, a chapelry to Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, standing at that time on the esplanade of the Invalides. This chapel, now destroyed, was rebuilt in the Rue de Bourgogne, pending the building of a Gothic church to be dedicated to Sainte-Clotilde.

On hearing the first words spoken in her ear by Diane de Maufrigneuse, this saintly lady went to find Monsieur de Grandlieu, and brought him back at once.

The Duke threw a flashing look at Madame Camusot, one of those rapid glances with which a man of the world can guess at a whole existence, or often read a soul. Amélie's dress greatly helped the Duke to decipher the story of a middle-class life, from Alençon to Mantes, and from Mantes to Paris.

Oh ! if only the lawyer's wife could have understood this gift in dukes, she could never have endured that politely ironical look ; she saw the politeness only. Ignorance shares the privileges of fine breeding.

'This is Madame Camusot, a daughter of Thirion's—one of the Cabinet ushers,' said the Duchess to her husband.

The Duke bowed with extreme politeness to the wife of a legal official, and his face became a little less grave.

The Duke had rung for his valet, who now came in.

'Go to the Rue Saint-Honoré : take a coach. Ring at a side door, No. 10. Tell the man who opens the door that I beg his master will come here, and if the gentleman is at home, bring him back with you.—Mention my name, that will remove all difficulties.

'And do not be gone more than a quarter of an hour in all.'

Another footman, the Duchess's servant, came in as soon as the other was gone.

'Go from me to the Duc de Chaulieu, and send up this card.'

The Duke gave him a card folded down in a particular way. When the two friends wanted to meet at once, on any urgent or confidential business which would not allow of note-writing, they used this means of communication.

Thus we see that similar customs prevail in every rank of society, and differ only in manner, civility, and small details. The world of fashion, too, has its *argot*, its slang ; but that slang is called style.

'Are you quite sure, Madame, of the existence of the

letters you say were written by Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu to this young man?' said the Duc de Grandlieu.

And he cast a look at Madame Camusot as a sailor casts a sounding line.

'I have not seen them, but there is reason to fear it,' replied Madame Camusot, quaking.

'My daughter can have written nothing we would not own to!' said the Duchess.

'Poor Duchess!' thought Diane, with a glance at the Duke that terrified him.

'What do you think, my dear little Diane?' said the Duke in a whisper, as he led her away into a recess.

'Clotilde is so crazy about Lucien, my dear friend, that she had made an assignation with him before leaving. If it had not been for little Lenoncourt, she would perhaps have gone off with him into the forest of Fontainebleau. I know that Lucien used to write letters to her which were enough to turn the brain of a saint.—We are three daughters of Eve in the coils of the serpent of letter-writing.'

The Duke and Diane came back to the Duchess and Madame Camusot, who were talking in undertones. Amélie, following the advice of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, affected piety to win the proud lady's favour.

'We are at the mercy of a dreadful escaped convict!' said the Duke, with a peculiar shrug. 'This is what comes of opening one's house to people one is not absolutely sure of. Before admitting an acquaintance, one ought to know all about his fortune, his relations, all his previous history——'

This speech is the moral of my story—from the aristocratic point of view.

'That is past and over,' said the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse. 'Now we must think of saving that poor Madame de Sérizy, Clotilde, and me——'

'We can but wait for Henri; I have sent to him.

But everything really depends on the man Gentil is gone to fetch. God grant that man may be in Paris!'—Madame,' he added to Madame Camusot, 'thank you so much for having thought of us——'

This was Madame Camusot's dismissal. The daughter of the Court usher had wit enough to understand the Duke; she rose. But the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, with the enchanting grace which won her so much friendship and discretion, took Amélie by the hand as if to show her, in a way, to the Duke and Duchess.

'On my own account,' said she, 'to say nothing of her having been up before daybreak to save us all, I ask you for more than a remembrance for my little Madame Camusot. In the first place, she has already done me such service as I cannot forget; and then she is wholly devoted to our side, she and her husband. I have promised that her Camusot shall have advancement, and I beg you above everything to help him on, for my sake.'

'You need no such recommendation,' said the Duke to Madame Camusot. 'The Grandlieus always remember a service done them. The King's adherents will ere long have a chance of distinguishing themselves; they will be called upon to prove their devotion; your husband will be placed in the front——'

Madame Camusot withdrew, proud, happy, puffed up to suffocation. She reached home triumphant; she admired herself, she made light of the public prosecutor's hostility. She said to herself—

'Supposing we were to send Monsieur de Granville flying——'

It was high time for Madame Camusot to vanish. The Duc de Chaulieu, one of the King's prime favourites, met the *bourgeoise* on the outer steps.

'Henri,' said the Duc de Grandlieu when he heard his friend announced, 'make haste, I beg of you, to get to the Château, try to see the King—the business is this;' and

he led the Duke into the window-recess, where he had been talking to the airy and charming Diane.

Now and then the Duc de Chaulieu glanced in the direction of the flighty Duchess, who, while talking to the pious Duchess and submitting to be lectured, answered the Duc de Chaulieu's expressive looks.

'My dear child,' said the Duc de Grandlieu to her at last, the *aside* being ended, 'do be good! Come, now,' and he took Diane's hands, 'observe the proprieties of life, do not compromise yourself any more, write no letters. Letters, my dear, have caused as much private woe as public mischief. What might be excusable in a girl like Clotilde, in love for the first time, had no excuse in——'

'An old soldier who has been under fire,' said Diane with a pout.

This grimace and the Duchess's jest brought a smile to the face of the two much-troubled Dukes, and of the pious Duchess herself.

'But for four years I have never written a *billet-doux*.—Are we saved?' asked Diane, who hid her curiosity under this childishness.

'Not yet,' said the Duc de Chaulieu. 'You have no notion how difficult it is to do an arbitrary thing. In a constitutional king it is what infidelity is in a wife: it is adultery.'

'The fascinating sin,' said the Duc de Grandlieu.

'Forbidden fruit!' said Diane, smiling. 'Oh! how I wish I were the Government, for I have none of that fruit left—I have eaten it all.'

'Oh! my dear, my dear!' said the elder Duchess, 'you really go too far.'

The two Dukes, hearing a coach stop at the door with the clatter of horses checked in full gallop, bowed to the ladies and left them, going into the Duc de Grandlieu's study, whither came the gentleman from the Rue Honoré-Chevalier—no less a man than the chief of the

King's private police, the obscure but puissant Corentin.

'Go on,' said the Duc de Grandlieu; 'go first, Monsieur de Saint-Denis.'

Corentin, surprised that the Duke should have remembered him, went forward after bowing low to the two noblemen.

'Always about the same individual, or about his concerns, my dear sir,' said the Duc de Grandlieu.

'But he is dead,' said Corentin.

'He has left a partner,' said the Duc de Chaulieu, 'a very tough customer.'

'The convict Jacques Collin,' replied Corentin.

'Will you speak, Ferdinand?' said the Duc de Chaulieu to his friend.

'That wretch is an object of fear,' said the Duc de Grandlieu, 'for he has possessed himself, so as to be able to levy blackmail, of the letters written by Madame de Sérizy and Madame de Maufrigneuse to Lucien Chardon, that man's tool. It would seem that it was a matter of system in the young man to extract passionate letters in return for his own, for I am told that Mademoiselle de Grandlieu had written some—at least, so we fear—and we cannot find out from her—she is gone abroad.'

'That little young man,' replied Corentin, 'was incapable of so much foresight. That was a precaution due to the Abbé Carlos Herrera.'

Corentin rested his elbow on the arm of the chair on which he was sitting, and his head on his hand, meditating.

'Money!—The man has more than we have,' said he. 'Esther Gobseck served him as a bait to extract nearly two million francs from that well of gold called Nucingen.—Gentlemen, get me full legal powers, and I will rid you of the fellow.'

'And—the letters?' asked the Duc de Grandlieu.

'Listen to me, gentlemen,' said Corentin, standing up, his weasel-face betraying his excitement.

He thrust his hands into the pockets of his black doeskin trousers, shaped over the shoes. This great actor in the historical drama of the day had only stopped to put on a waistcoat and frock-coat, and had not changed his morning trousers, so well he knew how grateful great men can be for immediate action in certain cases. He walked up and down the room quite at his ease, haranguing loudly, as if he had been alone.

'He is a convict. He could be sent off to Bicêtre without trial, and put in solitary confinement, without a soul to speak to, and left there to die.—But he may have given instructions to his adherents, foreseeing this possibility.'

'But he was put into the secret cells,' said the Duc de Grandlieu, 'the moment he was taken into custody at that woman's house.'

'Is there such a thing as a secret cell for such a fellow as he is?' said Corentin. 'He is a match for—for me!'

'What is to be done?' said the Dukes to each other by a glance.

'We can send the scoundrel back to the hulks at once—to Rochefort; he will be dead in six months! Oh! without committing any crime,' he added, in reply to a gesture on the part of the Duc de Grandlieu. 'What do you expect? A convict cannot hold out more than six months of a hot summer if he is made to work really hard among the marshes of the Charente. But this is of no use if our man has taken precautions with regard to the letters. If the villain has been suspicious of his foes, and that is probable, we must find out what steps he has taken. Then, if the present holder of the letters is poor, he is open to bribery. So, now, we must make Jacques Collin speak. What a duel! He will beat me. The better plan would be to purchase these letters by exchange for another docu-

ment—a letter of reprieve—and to place the man in my gang. Jacques Collin is the only man alive who is clever enough to come after me, poor Contenson and dear old Peyrade both being dead! Jacques Collin killed those two unrivalled spies on purpose, as it were, to make a place for himself. So, you see, gentlemen, you must give me a free hand. Jacques Collin is in the Conciergerie. I will go to see Monsieur de Granville in his Court. Send some one you can trust to meet me there, for I must have a letter to show to Monsieur de Granville, who knows nothing of me. I will hand the letter to the President of the Council, a very impressive sponsor. You have half an hour before you, for I need half an hour to dress, that is to say, to make myself presentable to the eyes of the public prosecutor.'

'Monsieur,' said the Duc de Chaulieu, 'I know your wonderful skill. I only ask you to say Yes or No. Will you be bound to succeed?'

'Yes, if I have full powers, and your word that I shall never be questioned about the matter.—My plan is laid.'

This sinister reply made the two fine gentlemen shiver. 'Go on, then, Monsieur,' said the Duc de Chaulieu. 'You can set down the charges of the case among those you are in the habit of undertaking.'

Corentin bowed and went away.

Henri de Lenoncourt, for whom Ferdinand de Grandlieu had a carriage brought out, went off forthwith to the King, whom he was privileged to see at all times in right of his office.

Thus all the various interests that had got entangled from the highest to the lowest ranks of society were to meet presently in Monsieur de Granville's room at the Palais, all brought together by necessity embodied in three men—Justice in Monsieur de Granville, and the family in Corentin, face to face with Jacques Collin, the terrible foe who represented social crime in its fiercest energy.

What a duel is that between justice and arbitrary wills on one side and the hulks and cunning on the other! The hulks—symbolical of that daring which throws off calculation and reflection, which avails itself of any means, which has none of the hypocrisy of high-handed justice, but is the hideous outcome of the starving stomach—the swift and bloodthirsty pretext of hunger. Is it not attack as against self-protection, theft as against property? The terrible quarrel between the social state and the natural man, fought out on the narrowest possible ground! In short, it is a terrible and vivid image of those compromises, hostile to social interests, which the representatives of authority, when they lack power, submit to with the fiercest rebels.

When Monsieur Camusot was announced, the public prosecutor signed that he should be admitted. Monsieur de Granville had foreseen this visit, and wished to come to an understanding with the examining judge as to how to wind up this business of Lucien's death. The end could no longer be that on which he had decided the day before in agreement with Camusot, before the suicide of the hapless poet.

'Sit down, Monsieur Camusot,' said Monsieur de Granville, dropping into his armchair. The public prosecutor, alone with the inferior judge, made no secret of his depressed state. Camusot looked at Monsieur de Granville and observed his almost livid pallor, and such utter fatigue, such complete prostration, as betrayed greater suffering perhaps than that of the condemned man to whom the clerk had announced the rejection of his appeal. And yet that announcement, in the forms of justice, is as much as to say, 'Prepare to die; your last hour has come.'

'I will return later, Monsieur le Comte,' said Camusot. 'Though the business is pressing——'

'No, stay,' replied the public prosecutor with dignity.

'A magistrate, Monsieur, must accept his anxieties and know how to hide them. I was in fault if you saw any traces of agitation in me——'

Camusot bowed apologetically.

'God grant you may never know these crucial perplexities of our life. A man might sink under less! I have just spent the night with one of my most intimate friends.—I have but two friends, the Comte Octave de Bauvan and the Comte de Sérizy.—We sat together, Monsieur de Sérizy, the Count, and I, from six in the evening till six this morning, taking it in turns to go from the drawing-room to Madame de Sérizy's bedside, fearing each time that we might find her dead or irremediably insane. Desplein, Bianchon, and Sinard never left the room, and she has two nurses. The Count worships his wife. Imagine the night I have spent, between a woman crazy with love and a man crazy with despair. And a statesman's despair is not like that of an idiot. Sérizy, as calm as if he were sitting in his place in council, clutched his chair to force himself to show us an unmoved countenance, while sweat stood over the brows bent by so much hard thought.—Worn out by want of sleep, I dozed from five till half-past seven, and I had to be here by half-past eight to warrant an execution. Take my word for it, Monsieur Camusot, when a judge has been toiling all night in such gulfs of sorrow, feeling the heavy hand of God on all human concerns, and heaviest on noble souls, it is hard to sit down here, in front of a desk, and say in cold blood, "Cut off a head at four o'clock! Destroy one of God's creatures full of life, health, and strength!"—And yet this is my duty! Sunk in grief myself, I must order the scaffold——

'The condemned wretch cannot know that his judge suffers anguish equal to his own. At this moment he and I, linked by a sheet of paper—I, society avenging itself; he, the crime to be avenged—embody the same

duty seen from two sides; we are two lives joined for the moment by the sword of the law.

'Who pities the judge's deep sorrow? Who can soothe it? Our glory is to bury it in the depth of our heart. The priest with his life given to God, the soldier with a thousand deaths for his country's sake, seem to me far happier than the magistrate with his doubts and fears and appalling responsibility.

'You know who the condemned man is?' Monsieur de Granville went on. 'A young man of seven-and-twenty—as handsome as he who killed himself yesterday, and as fair; condemned against all our anticipations, for the only proof against him was his concealment of the stolen goods. Though sentenced, the lad will confess nothing! For seventy days he has held out against every test, constantly declaring that he is innocent. For two months I have felt two heads on my shoulders! I would give a year of my life if he would confess, for juries need encouragement; and imagine what a blow it would be to justice if some day it should be discovered that the crime for which he is punished was committed by another.

'In Paris everything is so terribly important; the most trivial incidents in the law courts have political consequences.

'The jury, an institution regarded by the legislators of the Revolution as a source of strength, is, in fact, an instrument of social ruin, for it fails in action; it does not sufficiently protect society. The jury trifles with its functions. The class of jurymen is divided into two parties, one averse to capital punishment; the result is a total upheaval of true equality in administration of the law. Parricide, a most horrible crime, is in some departments treated with leniency, while in others a common murder, so to speak, is punished with death.[1]

[1] There are in penal servitude twenty-three parricides who have been allowed the benefit of *extenuating circumstances*.

And what would happen if here in Paris, in our home district, an innocent man should be executed!'

'He is an escaped convict,' said Monsieur Camusot, diffidently.

'The Opposition and the Press would make him a paschal lamb!' cried Monsieur de Granville; 'and the Opposition would enjoy white-washing him, for he is a fanatical Corsican, full of his native notions, and his murders were a *Vendetta*. In that island you may kill your enemy, and think yourself, and be thought, a very good man.

'A thorough-paced magistrate, I tell you, is an unhappy man. They ought to live apart from all society, like the pontiffs of old. The world should never see them but at fixed hours, leaving their cells, grave, and old, and venerable, passing sentence like the high priests of antiquity, who combined in their person the functions of judicial and sacerdotal authority. We should be accessible only in our high seat.—As it is, we are to be seen every day, amused or unhappy, like other men. We are to be found in drawing-rooms and at home, as ordinary citizens, moved by our passions; and we seem, perhaps, more grotesque than terrible.'

This bitter cry, broken by pauses and interjections, and emphasised by gestures which gave it an eloquence impossible to reduce to writing, made Camusot's blood run chill.

'And I, Monsieur,' said he, 'began yesterday my apprenticeship to the sufferings of our calling.—I could have died of that young fellow's death. He misunderstood my wish to be lenient, and the poor wretch committed himself.'

'Ah, you ought never to have examined him!' cried Monsieur de Granville; 'it is so easy to oblige by doing nothing.'

'And the law, Monsieur?' replied Camusot. 'He had been in custody two days.'

'The mischief is done,' said the public prosecutor. 'I have done my best to remedy what is indeed irremediable. My carriage and servants are following the poor weak poet to the grave. Sérizy has sent his too; nay, more, he accepts the duty imposed on him by the unfortunate boy, and will act as his executor. By promising this to his wife he won from her a gleam of returning sanity. And Count Octave is attending the funeral in person.'

'Well, then, Monsieur le Comte,' said Camusot, 'let us complete our work. We have a very dangerous man on our hands. He is Jacques Collin—and you know it as well as I do. The ruffian will be recognised——'

'Then we are lost!' cried Monsieur de Granville.

'He is at this moment shut up with your condemned murderer, who, on the hulks, was to him what Lucien has been in Paris—a favourite *protégé*. Bibi-Lupin, disguised as a gendarme, is watching the interview.'

'What business has the superior police to interfere?' said the public prosecutor. 'He has no business to act without my orders!'

'All the Conciergerie must know that we have caught Jacques Collin.—Well, I have come on purpose to tell you that this daring felon has in his possession the most compromising letters of Lucien's correspondence with Madame de Sérizy, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu.'

'Are you sure of that?' asked Monsieur de Granville, his face full of pained surprise.

'You shall hear, Monsieur le Comte, what reason I have to fear such a misfortune. When I untied the papers found in the young man's rooms, Jacques Collin gave a keen look at the parcel, and smiled with satisfaction in a way that no examining judge could misunderstand. So deep a villain as Jacques Collin takes good care not to let such a weapon slip through his fingers. What is to be said if these documents should be placed in the hands of counsel chosen by that rascal from among

the foes of the government and the aristocracy!—My wife, to whom the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse has shown much kindness, is gone to warn her, and by this time they must be with the Grandlieus holding council.'

'But we cannot possibly try the man!' cried the public prosecutor, rising and striding up and down the room. 'He must have put the papers in some safe place——'

'I know where,' said Camusot.

These words finally effaced every prejudice the public prosecutor had felt against him.

'Well, then——' said Monsieur de Granville, sitting down again.

'On my way here this morning I reflected deeply on this miserable business. Jacques Collin has an aunt—an aunt by nature, not putative—a woman concerning whom the superior police have communicated a report to the Préfecture. He is this woman's pupil and idol; she is his father's sister, her name Jacqueline Collin. This wretched woman carries on a trade as wardrobe purchaser, and by the connection this business has secured her she gets hold of many family secrets. If Jacques Collin has intrusted those papers, which would be his salvation, to any one's keeping, it is to that of this creature. Have her arrested.'

The public prosecutor gave Camusot a keen look, as much as to say, 'This man is not such a fool as I thought him; he is still young, and does not yet know how to handle the reins of justice.'

'But,' Camusot went on, 'in order to succeed, we must give up all the plans we laid yesterday, and I came to take your advice—your orders——'

The public prosecutor took up his paper-knife and tapped it against the edge of the table with one of the tricky movements familiar to thoughtful men when they give themselves up to meditation.

'Three noble families involved!' he exclaimed. 'We

must not make the smallest blunder!—You are right: as a first step let us act on Fouché's principle, "Arrest!"—And Jacques Collin must at once be sent back to the secret cells.'

'That is to proclaim him a convict and to ruin Lucien's memory!'

'What a desperate business!' said Monsieur de Granville. 'There is danger on every side.'

At this instant the governor of the Conciergerie came in, not without knocking; and the private room of a public prosecutor is so well guarded, that only those concerned about the courts may even knock at the door.

'Monsieur le Comte,' said Monsieur Gault, 'the prisoner calling himself Carlos Herrera wishes to speak with you.'

'Has he had communication with anybody?' asked Monsieur de Granville.

'With all the prisoners, for he has been out in the yard since about half-past seven. And he has seen the condemned man, who would seem to have talked to him.'

A speech of Camusot's, which recurred to his mind like a flash of light, showed Monsieur de Granville all the advantage that might be taken of a confession of intimacy between Jacques Collin and Théodore Calvi to obtain the letters. The public prosecutor, glad to have an excuse for postponing the execution, beckoned Monsieur Gault to his side.

'I intend,' said he, 'to put off the execution till to-morrow; but let no one in the prison suspect it. Absolute silence! Let the executioner seem to be superintending the preparations.

'Send the Spanish priest here under a strong guard; the Spanish Embassy claims his person! Gendarmes can bring up the self-styled Carlos by your back stairs so that he may see no one. Instruct the men each to hold

him by one arm, and never let him go till they reach this door.

'Are you quite sure, Monsieur Gault, that this dangerous foreigner has spoken to no one but the prisoners?'

'Ah! just as he came out of the condemned cell a lady came to see him——'

The two magistrates exchanged looks, and such looks!

'What lady was that?' asked Camusot.

'One of his penitents—a Marquise,' replied Gault.

'Worse and worse!' said Monsieur de Granville, looking at Camusot.

'She gave all the gendarmes and warders a sick headache,' said Monsieur Gault, much puzzled.

'Nothing can be a matter of indifference in your business,' said the public prosecutor. 'The Conciergerie has not such tremendous walls for nothing. How did this lady get in?'

'With a regular permit, Monsieur,' replied the governor. 'The lady, beautifully dressed, in a fine carriage with a footman and a *chasseur*, came to see her confessor before going to the funeral of the poor young man whose body you had had removed.'

'Bring me the order for admission,' said Monsieur de Granville.

'It was given on the recommendation of the Comte de Sérizy.'

'What was the woman like?' asked the public prosecutor.

'She seemed to be a lady.'

'Did you see her face?'

'She wore a black veil.'

'What did they say to each other?'

'Well—a pious person, with a prayer-book in her hand—what could she say? She asked the Abbé's blessing and went on her knees.'

'Did they talk together a long time?'

'Not five minutes; but we none of us understood what they said; they spoke Spanish no doubt.'

'Tell us everything, Monsieur,' the public prosecutor insisted. 'I repeat, the very smallest detail is to us of the first importance. Let this be a caution to you.'

'She was crying, Monsieur.'

'Really weeping?'

'That we could not see, she hid her face in her handkerchief. She left three hundred francs in gold for the prisoners.'

'That was not she!' said Camusot.

'Bibi-Lupin at once said, "She is a thief!"', said Monsieur Gault.

'He knows the tribe,' said Monsieur de Granville.—'Get out your warrant,' he added, turning to Camusot, 'and have seals placed on everything in her house—at once! But how can she have got hold of Monsieur de Sérizy's recommendation?—Bring me the order—and go, Monsieur Gault; send me that Abbé immediately. So long as we have him safe, the danger cannot be greater. And in the course of two hours' talk you get a long way down into a man's mind.'

'Especially such a public prosecutor as you are,' said Camusot insidiously.

'There will be two of us,' replied Monsieur de Granville politely.

And he became discursive once more.

'There ought to be created, for every prison parlour, a post of superintendent, to be given with a good salary to the cleverest and most energetic police officers,' said he, after a long pause. 'Bibi-Lupin ought to end his days in such a place. Then we should have an eye and an ear on the watch in a department that needs closer supervision than it gets.—Monsieur Gault could tell us nothing positive.'

'He has so much to do,' said Camusot. 'Still, between these secret cells and us there lies a gap which

ought not to exist. On the way from the Conciergerie to the judges' rooms there are passages, courtyards, and stairs. The attention of the agents cannot be unflagging, whereas the prisoner is always alive to his own affairs.

'I was told that a lady had already placed herself in the way of Jacques Collin when he was brought up from the cells to be examined. That woman got into the guardroom at the top of the narrow stairs from the mouse-trap; the ushers told me, and I blamed the gendarmes.'

'Oh! the Palais needs entire reconstruction,' said Monsieur de Granville. 'But it is an outlay of twenty to thirty million francs! Just try asking the Chambers for thirty millions for the more decent accommodation of Justice.'

The sound of many footsteps and a clatter of arms fell on their ear. It would be Jacques Collin.

The public prosecutor assumed a mask of gravity that hid the man. Camusot imitated his chief.

The office-boy opened the door, and Jacques Collin came in, quite calm and unmoved.

'You wished to speak to me,' said Monsieur de Granville. 'I am ready to listen.'

'Monsieur le Comte, I am Jacques Collin. I surrender!'

Camusot started; the public prosecutor was immovable.

'As you may suppose, I have my reasons for doing this,' said Jacques Collin, with an ironical glance at the two magistrates. 'I must inconvenience you greatly; for if I had remained a Spanish priest, you would simply have packed me off with an escort of gendarmes as far as the frontier by Bayonne, and there Spanish bayonets would have relieved you of me.'

The lawyers sat silent and imperturbable.

'Monsieur le Comte,' the convict went on, 'the reasons which have led me to this step are yet more pressing than this, but devilish personal to myself. I can tell them to no one but you.—If you are afraid——'

'Afraid of whom? Of what?' said the Comte de Granville.

In attitude and expression, in the turn of his head, his demeanour and his look, this distinguished judge was at this moment a living embodiment of the law which ought to supply us with the noblest examples of civic courage. In this brief instant he was on a level with the magistrates of the old French *Parlement* in the time of the civil wars, when the presidents found themselves face to face with death, and stood, made of marble, like the statues that commemorate them.

'Afraid to be alone with an escaped convict!'

'Leave us, Monsieur Camusot,' said the public prosecutor at once.

'I was about to suggest that you should bind me hand and foot,' Jacques Collin coolly added, with an ominous glare at the two gentlemen. He paused, and then said with great gravity—

'Monsieur le Comte, you had my esteem, but you now command my admiration.'

'Then you think you are formidable?' said the magistrate, with a look of supreme contempt.

'*Think* myself formidable?' retorted the convict. 'Why think about it? I am, and I know it.'

Jacques Collin took a chair and sat down, with all the ease of a man who feels himself a match for his adversary in an interview where they would treat on equal terms.

At this instant Monsieur Camusot, who was on the point of closing the door behind him, turned back, came up to Monsieur de Granville, and handed him two folded papers.

'Look!' said he to Monsieur de Granville, pointing to one of them.

'Call back Monsieur Gault!' cried the Comte de Granville, as he read the name of Madame de Maufrigneuse's maid—a woman he knew.

The governor of the prison came in.

'Describe the woman who came to see the prisoner,' said the public prosecutor in his ear.

'Short, thick-set, fat, and square,' replied Monsieur Gault.

'The woman to whom this permit was given is tall and thin,' said Monsieur de Granville. 'How old was she?'

'About sixty.'

'This concerns me, gentlemen?' said Jacques Collin. 'Come, do not puzzle your heads. That person is my aunt, a very plausible aunt, a woman, and an old woman. I can save you a great deal of trouble. You will never find my aunt unless I choose. If we beat about the bush, we shall never get forwarder.'

'Monsieur l'Abbé has lost his Spanish accent,' observed Monsieur Gault; 'he does not speak broken French.'

'Because things are in a desperate mess, my dear Monsieur Gault,' replied Jacques Collin with a bitter smile, as he addressed the governor by name.

Monsieur Gault went quickly up to his chief, and said in a whisper, 'Beware of that man, Monsieur le Comte; he is mad with rage.'

Monsieur de Granville gazed slowly at Jacques Collin, and saw that he was controlling himself; but he saw, too, that what the governor said was true. This treacherous demeanour covered the cold but terrible nervous irritation of a savage. In Jacques Collin's eyes were the lurid fires of a volcanic eruption, his fists were clenched. He was a tiger gathering himself up to spring.

'Leave us,' said the Count gravely to the prison governor and the judge.

'You did wisely to send away Lucien's murderer!' said Jacques Collin, without caring whether Camusot

heard him or no; 'I could not contain myself, I should have strangled him.'

Monsieur de Granville felt a chill; never had he seen a man's eyes so full of blood, or cheeks so colourless, or muscles so set.

'And what good would that murder have done you?' he quietly asked.

'You avenge society, or fancy you avenge it, every day, Monsieur, and you ask me to give a reason for revenge? Have you never felt vengeance throbbing in surges in your veins? Don't you know that it was that idiot of a judge who killed him?—For you were fond of my Lucien, and he loved you! I know you by heart, sir. The dear boy would tell me everything at night when he came in; I used to put him to bed as a nurse tucks up a child, and I made him tell me everything. He confided everything to me, even his least sensations!

'The best of mothers never loved an only son so tenderly as I loved that angel! If only you knew! All that is good sprang up in his heart as flowers grow in the fields. He was weak; it was his only fault, weak as the string of a lyre, which is so strong when it is taut. These are the most beautiful natures; their weakness is simply tenderness, admiration, the power of expanding in the sunshine of art, of love, of the beauty God has made for man in a thousand shapes!—In short, Lucien was a woman spoiled. Oh! what could I not say to that brute beast who has just gone out of the room!

'I tell you, Monsieur, in my degree, as a prisoner before his judge, I did what God A'mighty would have done for His Son if, hoping to save Him, He had gone with Him before Pilate!'

A flood of tears fell from the convict's light tawny eyes, which just now had glared like those of a wolf starved by six months' snow in the plains of the Ukraine. He went on—

'That dolt would listen to nothing, and he killed the boy!—I tell you, sir, I bathed the child's corpse in my tears, crying out to the Power I do not know, and which is above us all! I, who do not believe in God!—(For if I were not a materialist, I should not be myself.)

'I have told everything when I say that. You don't know—no man knows what suffering is. I alone know it. The fire of anguish so dried up my tears, that all last night I could not weep. Now I can, because I feel that you can understand me. I saw you, sitting there just now, an Image of Justice. Oh! Monsieur, may God—for I am beginning to believe in Him—preserve you from ever being as bereft as I am! That cursed judge has robbed me of my soul, Monsieur le Comte! At this moment they are burying my life, my beauty, my virtue, my conscience, all my powers! Imagine a dog from which a chemist had extracted the blood.—That's me! I am that dog——

'And that is why I have come to tell you that I am Jacques Collin, and to give myself up. I made up my mind to it this morning when they came and carried away the body I was kissing like a madman—like a mother—as the Virgin must have kissed Jesus in the tomb.

'I meant then to give myself up to justice without driving any bargain; but now I must make one, and you shall know why.'

'Are you speaking to the judge or to Monsieur de Granville?' asked the magistrate.

The two men, Crime and Law, looked at each other. The magistrate had been strongly moved by the convict; he felt a sort of divine pity for the unhappy wretch; he understood what his life and feelings were. And besides, the magistrate—for a magistrate is always a magistrate—knowing nothing of Jacques Collin's career since his escape from prison, fancied that he could impress the criminal who, after all, had only been sentenced for

forgery. He would try the effect of generosity on this nature, a compound, like bronze, of various elements, of good and evil.

Again, Monsieur de Granville, who had reached the age of fifty-three without ever having been loved, admired a tender soul, as all men do who have not been beloved. This despair, the lot of many men to whom women can only give esteem and friendship, was perhaps the unknown bond on which the strong intimacy was based that united the Comtes de Bauvan, de Granville, and de Sérizy; for a common misfortune brings souls into unison quite as much as a common joy.

'You have the future before you,' said the public prosecutor, with an inquisitorial glance at the dejected villain.

The man only expressed by a shrug the utmost indifference to his fate.

'Lucien made a will by which he leaves you three hundred thousand francs.'

'Poor, poor chap! poor boy!' cried Jacques Collin. 'Always too honest! I was all wickedness, while he was goodness—noble, beautiful, sublime! Such lovely souls cannot be spoiled. He had taken nothing from me but my money, sir.'

This utter and complete surrender of his individuality, which the magistrate vainly strove to rally, so thoroughly proved his dreadful words, that Monsieur de Granville was won over to the criminal. The public prosecutor remained!

'If you really care for nothing,' said Monsieur de Granville, 'what did you want to say to me?'

'Well, is it not something that I have given myself up? You were getting warm, but you had not got me; besides, you would not have known what to do with me——'

'What an antagonist!' said the magistrate to himself.

'Monsieur le Comte, you are about to cut off the head of an innocent man, and I have discovered the culprit,' said Jacques Collin, wiping away his tears. 'I have come here not for their sakes, but for yours. I have come to spare you remorse, for I love all who took an interest in Lucien, just as I will give my hatred full play against all who helped to cut off his life—men or women!

'What can a convict more or less matter to me?' he went on, after a short pause. 'A convict is no more in my eyes than an emmet is in yours. I am like the Italian brigands—fine men they are! If a traveller is worth ever so little more than the charge of their musket, they shoot him dead.

'I thought only of you.—I got the young man to make a clean breast of it; he was bound to trust me, we had been chained together. Théodore is very good stuff; he thought he was doing his mistress a good turn by undertaking to sell or pawn the stolen goods; but he is no more guilty of the Nanterre job than you are. He is a Corsican; it is their way to revenge themselves and kill each other like flies. In Italy and Spain a man's life is not respected, and the reason is plain. There we are believed to have a soul in our own image, which survives us and lives for ever. Tell that to your analyst! It is only among atheistical or philosophical nations that those who mar human life are made to pay so dearly; and with reason from their point of view—a belief only in matter and in the present.

'If Calvi had told you who the woman was from whom he obtained the stolen goods, you would not have found the real murderer; he is already in your hands; but his accomplice, whom poor Théodore will not betray because she is a woman—— Well, every calling has its point of honour; convicts and thieves have theirs!

'Now, I know the murderer of those two women and the inventors of that bold, strange plot; I have been told every detail. Postpone Calvi's execution, and you shall

know all; but you must give me your word that he shall be sent safe back to the hulks and his punishment commuted. A man so miserable as I am does not take the trouble to lie—you know that. What I have told you is the truth.'

'To you, Jacques Collin, though it is degrading Justice, which ought never to condescend to such a compromise, I believe I may relax the rigidity of my office and refer the case to my superiors.'

'Will you grant me this life?'

'Possibly.'

'Monsieur, I implore you to give me your word; it will be enough.'

Monsieur Granville drew himself up with offended pride.

'I hold in my hand the honour of three families, and you only the lives of three convicts in yours,' said Jacques Collin. 'I have the stronger hand.'

'But you may be sent back to the dark cells: then, what will you do?' said the public prosecutor.

'Oh! we are to play the game out then!' said Jacques Collin. 'I was speaking as man to man—I was talking to Monsieur de Granville. But if the public prosecutor is my adversary, I take up the cards and hold them close.—And if only you had given me your word, I was ready to give you back the letters that Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu——'

This was said with a tone, an audacity, and a look which showed Monsieur de Granville that against such an adversary the least blunder was dangerous.

'And is that all you ask?' said the magistrate.

'I will speak for myself now,' said Jacques. 'The honour of the Grandlieu family is to pay for the commutation of Théodore's sentence. It is giving much to get very little. For what is a convict in penal servitude for life? If he escapes, you can so easily settle the score. It is drawing a bill on the guillotine! Only, as he was

consigned to Rochefort with no amiable intentions, you must promise me that he shall be quartered at Toulon, and well treated there.

'Now, for myself, I want something more. I have the packets of letters from Madame de Sérizy and Madame de Maufrigneuse.—And what letters!—I tell you, Monsieur le Comte, prostitutes, when they write letters, assume a style of sentiment; well, sir, fine ladies, who are accustomed to style and sentiment all day long, write as prostitutes behave. Philosophers may know the reasons for this contrariness. I do not care to seek them. Woman is an inferior animal; she is ruled by her instincts. To my mind, a woman has no beauty who is not like a man.

'So your smart duchesses, who are men in brains only, write masterpieces. Oh! they are splendid from beginning to end, like Piron's famous ode!——'

'Indeed!'

'Would you like to see them?' said Jacques Collin, with a laugh.

The magistrate felt ashamed.

'I cannot give them to you to read. But, there; no nonsense; this is business and all above board, I suppose?—You must give me back the letters, and allow no one to play the spy or to follow or watch the person who will bring them to me.'

'That will take time,' said Monsieur de Granville.

'No. It is half-past nine,' replied Jacques Collin, looking at the clock; 'well, in four minutes you will have a letter from each of these ladies, and after reading them you will countermand the guillotine. If matters were not as they are, you would not see me taking things so easy.—The ladies indeed have had warning.'—Monsieur de Granville was startled.—'They must be making a stir by now; they are going to bring the Keeper of the Seals into the fray—they may even appeal to the King, who knows?—Come, now, will you give me

your word that you will forget all that has passed, and neither follow, nor send any one to follow, that person for a whole hour?'

'I promise it.'

'Very well; you are not the man to deceive an escaped convict. You are a chip of the block of which Turennes and Condés are made, and would keep your word to a thief.—In the Salle des Pas-Perdus there is at this moment a beggar woman in rags, an old woman, in the very middle of the hall. She is probably gossiping with one of the public writers, about some lawsuit over a party-wall perhaps; send your office messenger to fetch her, saying these words, '*Dabor ti Mandana*' (the Boss wants you). She will come.

'But do not be unnecessarily cruel. Either you accept my terms or you do not choose to be mixed up in a business with a convict.—I am only a forger, you will remember!—Well, do not leave Calvi to go through the terrors of preparation for the scaffold.'

'I have already countermanded the execution,' said Monsieur de Granville to Jacques Collin. 'I would not have Justice beneath you in dignity.'

Jacques Collin looked at the public prosecutor with a sort of amazement, and saw him ring his bell.

'Will you promise not to escape? Give me your word, and I shall be satisfied. Go and fetch the woman.'

The office boy came in.

'Félix, send away the gendarmes,' said Monsieur de Granville.

Jacques Collin was conquered.

In this duel with the magistrate he had tried to be the superior, the stronger, the more magnanimous, and the magistrate had crushed him. At the same time, the convict felt himself the superior, inasmuch as he had tricked the Law; he had convinced it that the guilty man was innocent, and had fought for a man's head and won it; but this advantage must be unconfessed, secret and

hidden, while the magistrate towered above him majestically in the eye of day.

As Jacques Collin left Monsieur de Granville's room, the Comte des Lupeaulx, Secretary-in-Chief of the President of the Council, and a deputy, made his appearance, and with him a feeble-looking, little old man. This individual, wrapped in a puce-coloured overcoat, as though it were still winter, with powdered hair, and a cold, pale face, had a gouty gait, unsteady on feet that were shod with loose calf-skin boots; leaning on a gold-headed cane, he carried his hat in his hand, and wore a row of seven orders in his button-hole.

'What is it, my dear des Lupeaulx?' asked the public prosecutor.

'I come from the Prince,' replied the Count, in a low voice. 'You have *carte blanche* if you can only get the letters—Madame de Sérizy's, Madame de Maufrigneuse's, and Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu's. You may come to some arrangement with this gentleman——'

'Who is he?' asked Monsieur de Granville, in a whisper.

'There are no secrets between you and me, my dear sir,' said des Lupeaulx. 'This is the famous Corentin. His Majesty desires that you will yourself tell him all the details of this affair and the conditions of success.'

'Do me the kindness,' replied the public prosecutor, 'of going to tell the Prince that the matter is settled, that I have not needed this gentleman's assistance,' and he turned to Corentin. 'I will wait on His Majesty for his commands with regard to the last steps in the matter, which will lie with the Keeper of the Seals, as two reprieves will need signing.'

'You have been wise to take the initiative,' said des Lupeaulx, shaking hands with the Comte de Granville. 'On the very eve of a great undertaking the King is most anxious that the peers and the great families should

not be shown up, blown upon. It ceases to be a low criminal case; it becomes an affair of State.'

'But tell the Prince that by the time you came it was all settled.'

'Really!'

'I believe so.'

'Then you, my dear fellow, will be Keeper of the Seals as soon as the present Keeper is made Chancellor——'

'I have no ambition,' replied the magistrate.

Des Lupeaulx laughed, and went away.

'Beg of the Prince to request the King to grant me ten minutes' audience at about half-past two,' added Monsieur de Granville, as he accompanied the Comte des Lupeaulx to the door.

'So you are not ambitious!' said des Lupeaulx, with a keen look at Monsieur de Granville. 'Come, you have two children, you would like at least to be made peer of France.'

'If you have the letters, Monsieur le Procureur Général, my intervention is unnecessary,' said Corentin, finding himself alone with Monsieur de Granville, who looked at him with very natural curiosity.

'Such a man as you can never be superfluous in so delicate a case,' replied the magistrate, seeing that Corentin had heard or guessed everything.

Corentin bowed with a patronising air.

'Do you know the man in question, Monsieur?'

'Yes, Monsieur le Comte, it is Jacques Collin, the head of the "Ten Thousand Francs Association," the banker for three penal settlements, a convict who, for the last five years, has succeeded in concealing himself under the robe of the Abbé Carlos Herrera. How he ever came to be intrusted with a mission to the late King from the King of Spain is a question which we have all puzzled ourselves with trying to answer. I am now expecting information from Madrid, whither I have



sent notes and a man. That convict holds the secrets of two kings.'

'He is a man of mettle and temper. We have only two courses open to us,' said the public prosecutor. 'We must secure his fidelity, or get him out of the way.'

'The same idea has struck us both, and that is a great honour for me,' said Corentin. 'I am obliged to have so many ideas, and for so many people, that out of them all I ought occasionally to meet a clever man.'

He spoke so drily, and in so icy a tone, that Monsieur de Granville made no reply, and proceeded to attend to some pressing matters.

Mademoiselle Jacqueline Collin's amazement on seeing Jacques Collin in the Salle des Pas-Perdus is beyond imagining. She stood square on her feet, her hands on her hips, for she was dressed as a costermonger. Accustomed as she was to her nephew's conjuring tricks, this beat everything.

'Well, if you are going to stare at me as if I were a natural history show,' said Jacques Collin, taking his aunt by the arm and leading her out of the hall, 'we shall be taken for a pair of curious specimens; they may take us into custody, and then we should lose time.'

And he went down the stairs of the Galerie Marchande leading to the Rue de la Barillerie. 'Where is Paccard?'

'He is waiting for me at La Rousse's, walking up and down the flower market.'

'And Prudence?'

'Also at her house, as my god-daughter.'

'Let us go there.'

'Look round and see if we are watched.'

La Rousse, a hardware dealer living on the Quai aux fleurs, was the widow of a famous murderer, one of the 'Ten Thousand.' In 1819, Jacques Collin had faithfully handed over twenty thousand francs and odd to this

woman from her lover, after he had been executed. Trompe-la-Mort was the only person who knew of his pal's connection with the girl, at that time a milliner.

'I am your young man's boss,' the boarder at Madame Vauquer's had told her, having sent for her to meet him at the Jardin des Plantes. 'He may have mentioned me to you, my dear.—Any one who plays me false dies within a year; on the other hand, those who are true to me have nothing to fear from me. I am staunch through thick and thin, and would die without saying a word that would compromise anybody I wish well to. Stick to me as a soul sticks to the Devil, and you will find the benefit of it. I promised your poor Auguste that you should be happy; he wanted to make you a rich woman, and he got scragged for your sake.

'Don't cry; listen to me. No one in the world knows that you were mistress to a convict, to the murderer they choked off last Saturday; and I shall never tell. You are two-and-twenty, and pretty, and you have twenty-six thousand francs of your own; forget Auguste and get married; be an honest woman if you can. In return for peace and quiet, I only ask you to serve me now and then, me, and any one I may send to you, but without stopping to think. I will never ask you to do anything that can get you into trouble, you or your children, or your husband, if you get one, or your family.

'In my line of life I often want a safe place to talk in or to hide in. Or I may want a trusty woman to carry a letter or do an errand. You will be one of my letter-boxes, one of my porters' lodges, one of my messengers, neither more nor less.

'You are too red-haired; Auguste and I used to call you la Rousse; you can keep that name. My aunt, an old-clothes dealer at the Temple, who will come and see you, is the only person in the world you are to obey; tell her everything that happens to you; she will find you a husband, and be very useful to you.'

And thus the bargain was struck, a diabolical compact like that which had for so long bound Prudence Servien to Jacques Collin, and which the man never failed to tighten; for, like the Devil, he had a passion for recruiting.

In about 1821 Jacques Collin found la Rousse a husband in the person of the chief shopman under a rich wholesale tin merchant. This head-clerk, having purchased his master's house of business, was now a prosperous man, the father of two children, and one of the district Maire's deputies. La Rousse, now Madame Prélard, had never had the smallest ground for complaint, either of Jacques Collin or of his aunt; still, each time she was required to help them, Madame Prélard quaked in every limb. So, as she saw the terrible couple come into her shop, she turned as pale as death.

'We want to speak to you on business, Madame,' said Jacques Collin.

'My husband is in there,' said she.

'Very well; we have no immediate need of you. I never put people out of their way for nothing.'

'Send for a hackney coach, my dear,' said Jacqueline Collin, 'and tell my god-daughter to come down. I hope to place her as maid to a very great lady, and the steward of the house will take us there.'

A shop boy fetched the coach, and a few minutes later Europe, or, to be rid of the name under which she had served Esther, Prudence Servien, Paccard, Jacques Collin, and his aunt, were, to la Rousse's great joy, packed into a coach, ordered by Trompe-la-Mort to drive to the Barrière d'Ivry.

Prudence and Paccard, quaking in presence of the boss, felt like guilty souls in the presence of God.

'Where are the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs?' asked the boss, looking at them with the clear, penetrating gaze which so effectually curdled the blood of these tools of his, these *âmes damnées*, when they were

caught tripping, that they felt as though their scalp were set with as many pins as hairs.

'The seven hundred and *thirty* thousand francs,' said Jacqueline Collin to her nephew, 'are quite safe; I gave them to la Romette this morning in a sealed packet.'

'If you had not handed them over to Jacqueline,' said Trompe-la-Mort, 'you would have gone straight there,' and he pointed to the Place de Grève, which they were just passing.

Prudence Servien, in her country fashion, made the sign of the Cross, as if she had seen a thunderbolt fall.

'I forgive you,' said the boss, 'on condition of your committing no more mistakes of this kind, and of your being henceforth to me what these two fingers are of my right hand,' and he pointed to the first and middle fingers, 'for this good woman is the thumb,' and he slapped his aunt on the shoulder.

'Listen to me,' he went on. 'You, Paccard, have nothing more to fear; you may follow your nose about *Pantin* (Paris) as you please. I give you leave to marry Prudence Servien.'

Paccard took Jacques Collin's hand and kissed it respectfully.

'And what must I do?' said he.

'Nothing; and you will have dividends and women, to say nothing of your wife—for you have a touch of the Regency about you, old boy!—That comes of being such a fine man!'

Paccard coloured under his sultan's ironical praises.

'You, Prudence,' Jacques went on, 'will want a career, a position, a future; you must remain in my service. Listen to me. There is a very good house in the Rue Sainte-Barbe belonging to that Madame de Saint-Estève, whose name my aunt occasionally borrows. It is a very good business, with plenty of custom, bring-

ing in fifteen to twenty thousand francs a year. Sainte-Estève puts a woman in to keep the shop——'

'La Gonore,' said Jacqueline.

'Poor la Pouraille's moll,' said Paccard. 'That is where I bolted to with Europe the day that poor Madame Van Bogseck died, our mis'ess.'

'Who jabbers when I am speaking?' said Jacques Collin.

Perfect silence fell in the coach. Paccard and Prudence did not dare look at each other.

'The shop is kept by la Gonore,' Jacques Collin went on. 'If that is where you went to hide with Prudence, I see, Paccard, that you have wit enough to dodge the reelers (mislead the police), but not enough to puzzle the old lady,' and he stroked his aunt's chin. 'Now I see how she managed to find you.—It all fits beautifully. You may go back to la Gonore.—To go on: Jacqueline will arrange with Madame Nourrisson to purchase her business in the Rue Sainte-Barbe; and if you manage well, child, you may make a fortune out of it,' he said to Prudence. 'An Abbess at your age! It is worthy of a Daughter of France,' he added in a hard tone.

Prudence flung her arms round Trompe-la-Mort's neck and hugged him; but the boss flung her off with a sharp blow, showing his extraordinary strength, and but for Paccard, the girl's head would have struck and broken the coach window.

'Paws off! I don't like such ways,' said the boss stiffly. 'It is disrespectful to me.'

'He is right, child,' said Paccard. 'Why, you see, it is as though the boss had made you a present of a hundred thousand francs. The shop is worth that. It is on the Boulevard, opposite the Gymnase. The people come out of the theatre——'

'I will do more,' said Trompe-la-Mort; 'I will buy the house.'

'And in six years we shall be millionaires,' cried Paccard.

Tired of being interrupted, Trompe-la-Mort gave Paccard's shin a kick hard enough to break it; but the man's tendons were of india-rubber, and his bones of wrought iron.

'All right, boss, mum it is,' said he.

'Do you think I am cramming you with lies?' said Jacques Collin, perceiving that Paccard had had a few drops too much. 'Well, listen. In the cellar of that house there are two hundred and fifty thousand francs in gold——'

Again silence reigned in the coach.

'The coin is in a very hard bed of masonry. It must be got out, and you have only three nights to do it in. Jacqueline will help you.—A hundred thousand francs will buy up the business, fifty thousand will pay for the house, leave the remainder.'

'Where?' said Paccard.

'In the cellar?' asked Prudence.

'Silence!' cried Jacqueline.

'Yes, but to get the business transferred, we must have the consent of the police authorities,' Paccard objected.

'We shall have it,' said Trompe-la-Mort. 'Don't meddle in what does not concern you.'

Jacqueline looked at her nephew, and was struck by the alteration in his face, visible through the stern mask under which the strong man generally hid his feelings.

'You, child,' said he to Prudence Servien, 'will receive from my aunt the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs——'

'Seven hundred and thirty,' said Paccard.

'Very good, seven hundred and thirty then,' said Jacques Collin. 'You must return this evening under some pretext to Madame Lucien's house. Get out on the roof through the skylight; get down the chimney

into your mis'ess's room, and hide the packet she had made of the money in the mattress——'

'And why not by the door?' asked Prudence Servien.

'Idiot! there are seals on everything,' replied Jacques Collin. 'In a few days the inventory will be taken, and you will be innocent of the theft.'

'Good for the boss!' cried Paccard. 'That is really kind!'

'Stop, coachman!' said Jacques Collin's powerful voice.

The coach was close to the stand by the Jardin des Plantes.

'Be off, young 'uns,' said Jacques Collins, 'and do nothing silly! Be on the Pont des Arts this afternoon at five, and my aunt will let you know if there are any orders to the contrary.—We must be prepared for everything,' he whispered to his aunt. 'To-morrow,' he went on, 'Jacqueline will tell you how to dig up the gold without any risk. It is a ticklish job——'

Paccard and Prudence jumped out on to the King's highway, as happy as reprieved thieves.

'What a good fellow the boss is!' said Paccard.

'He would be the king of men if he were not so rough on women.'

'Oh yes! He is a sweet creature,' said Paccard. 'Did you see how he kicked me? Well, we deserved to be sent to old Nick; for, after all, we got him into this scrape.'

'If only he does not drag us into some dirty job, and get us packed off to the hulks yet,' said the wily Prudence.

'Not he! If he had that in his head, he would tell us; you don't know him.—He has provided handsomely for you. Here we are, citizens at large! Oh, when that man takes a fancy to you, he has not his match for good-nature.'

'Now, my jewel,' said Jacques Collin to his aunt, 'you must take la Gonore in hand; she must be hum-

bugged. Five days hence she will be taken into custody, and a hundred and fifty thousand francs will be found in her rooms, the remains of a share from the robbery and murder of the old Crottat couple, the notary's father and mother.'

'She will get five years in the Madelonnettes,' said Jacqueline.

'That 's about it,' said the nephew. 'This will be a reason for old Nourrisson to get rid of her house; she cannot manage it herself, and a manager to suit is not to be found every day. You can arrange all that. We shall have a sharp eye there.—But all these three things are secondary to the business I have undertaken with regard to our letters. So unrip your gown and give me the samples of the goods. Where are the three packets?'

'At la Rousse's, of course.'

'Coachman,' cried Jacques Collin, 'go back to the Palais de Justice, and look sharp——

'I promised to be quick, and I have been gone half an hour; that is too much.—Stay at la Rousse's, and give the sealed parcels to the office clerk, who will come and ask for Madame *de* Saint-Estève; the *de* will be the password. He will say to you, "Madame, I have come from the public prosecutor for the things you know of." Stand waiting outside the door, staring about at what is going on in the Flower-Market, so as not to arouse Prélard's suspicions. As soon as you have given up the letters, you can start Paccard and Prudence.'

'I see what you are at,' said Jacqueline; 'you mean to step into Bibi-Lupin's shoes. That boy's death has turned your brain.'

'And there is Théodore, who was just going to have his hair cropped to be scragged at four this afternoon!' cried Jacques Collin.

'Well, it is a notion! We shall end our days as honest folks in a fine property and a delightful climate—in Touraine.'

'What was to become of me? Lucien has taken my soul with him, and all my joy in life. I have thirty years before me to be sick of life in, and I have no heart left. Instead of being the boss of the hulks, I shall be a Figaro of the law, and avenge Lucien. I can never be sure of safely demolishing Corentin excepting in the skin of a police agent. And so long as I have a man to devour, I shall still feel alive.—The profession a man follows in the eyes of the world is a mere sham; the reality is in the idea!' he added, striking his forehead.—'How much have we left in the cash-box?' he asked.

'Nothing,' said his aunt, dismayed by the man's tone and manner. 'I gave you all I had for the boy. La Romette has not more than twenty thousand francs left in the business. I took everything from Madame Nourrisson; she had about sixty thousand francs of her own. Oh! we are lying in sheets that have not been washed this twelve months past. That boy had all the pals' blunt, our savings, and all old Nourrisson's.'

'Making——?'

'Five hundred and sixty thousand.'

'We have a hundred and fifty thousand which Paccard and Prudence will pay us. I will tell you where to find two hundred thousand more. The remainder will come to me out of Esther's money. We must repay old Nourrisson. With Théodore, Paccard, Prudence, Nourrisson, and you, I shall soon have the holy alliance I require.—Listen, now, we are nearly there——'

'Here are the three letters,' said Jacqueline, who had finished unsewing the lining of her gown.

'Quite right,' said Jacques Collin, taking the three precious documents—autograph letters on vellum paper, and still strongly scented. 'Théodore did the Nanterre job.'

'Oh! it was he.'

'Don't talk. Time is precious. He wanted to give the proceeds to a little Corsican sparrow named Ginetta.

You must set old Nourrisson to find her; I will give you the necessary information in a letter which Gault will give you. Come for it to the gate of the Conciergerie in two hours' time. You must place the girl with a washerwoman, Godet's sister; she must seem at home there. Godet and Ruffard were concerned with la Pouraille in robbing and murdering the Crottats.

'The four hundred and fifty thousand francs are all safe, one-third in la Gonore's cellar—la Pouraille's share; the second third in la Gonore's bedroom, which is Ruffard's; and the rest is hidden in Godet's sister's house. We will begin by taking a hundred and fifty thousand francs out of la Pouraille's whack, a hundred thousand of Godet's, and a hundred thousand of Ruffard's. As soon as Godet and Ruffard are nabbed, they will be supposed to have got rid of what is missing from their shares. And I will make Godet believe that I have saved a hundred thousand francs for him, and that la Gonore has done the same for la Pouraille and Ruffard.

'Prudence and Paccard will do the job at la Gonore's; you and Ginetta—who seems to be a smart hussy—must manage the job at Godet's sister's place.

'And so, as the first act in the farce, I can enable the public prosecutor to lay his hand on four hundred thousand francs stolen from the Crottats, and on the guilty parties. Then I shall seem to have shown up the Nanterre murderer. We shall get back our shiners, and are behind the scenes with the police. We were the game, now we are the hunters—that is all.

'Give the driver three francs.'

The coach was at the Palais. Jacqueline, speechless with astonishment, paid. Trompe-la-Mort went up the steps to the public prosecutor's room.

A complete change of life is so violent a crisis, that Jacques Collin, in spite of his resolution, mounted the steps but slowly, going up from the Rue de la Barillerie

to the Galerie Marchande, where, under the gloomy peristyle of the court-house, is the entrance to the Court itself.

Some civil case was going on which had brought a little crowd together at the foot of the double stairs leading to the Assize Court, so that the convict, lost in thought, stood for some minutes, checked by the throng.

To the left of this double flight is one of the mainstays of the building, like an enormous pillar, and in this tower is a little door. This door opens on a spiral staircase down to the Conciergerie, to which the public prosecutor, the governor of the prison, the presiding judges, King's council, and the chief of the Safety department have access by this backway.

It was up a side staircase from this, now walled up, that Marie Antoinette, the Queen of France, was led before the Revolutionary tribunal which sat, as we all know, in the great hall where appeals are now heard before the Supreme Court. The heart sinks within us at the sight of these dreadful steps, when we think that Marie Thérèse's daughter, whose suite, and head-dress, and hoops filled the great staircase at Versailles, once passed that way! Perhaps it was in expiation of her mother's crime—the atrocious division of Poland. The sovereigns who commit such crimes evidently never think of the retribution to be exacted by Providence.

When Jacques Collin went up the vaulted stairs to the public prosecutor's room, Bibi-Lupin was just coming out of the little door in the wall.

The chief of the 'Safety' had come from the Conciergerie, and was also going up to Monsieur de Granville. It is easy to imagine Bibi-Lupin's surprise when he recognised, in front of him, the gown of Carlos Herrera, which he had so thoroughly studied that morning; he ran on to pass him. Jacques Collin turned round, and the enemies were face to face. Each stood still, and the self-same look flashed in both pairs of eyes,

so different in themselves, as in a duel two pistols go off at the same instant.

'This time I have got you, rascal!' said the chief of the Safety department.

'Ah, ha!' replied Jacques Collin ironically.

It flashed through his mind that Monsieur de Granville had sent some one to watch him, and, strange to say, it pained him to think the magistrate less magnanimous than he had supposed.

Bibi-Lupin bravely flew at Jacques Collin's throat; but he, keeping his eye on the foe, gave him a straight blow, and sent him sprawling on his back three yards off; then Trompe-la-Mort went calmly up to Bibi-Lupin, and held out a hand to help him to rise, exactly like an English boxer who, sure of his superiority, is ready for more. Bibi-Lupin knew better than to call out; but he sprang to his feet, ran to the entrance to the passage, and signed to a gendarme to stand on guard. Then, swift as lightning, he came back to the foe, who quietly looked on. Jacques Collin had decided what to do.

'Either the public prosecutor has broken his word, or he has not taken Bibi-Lupin into his confidence, and in that case I must get the matter explained,' thought he.—'Do you mean to arrest me?' he asked his enemy. 'Say so without more ado. Don't I know that in the heart of this place you are stronger than I am? I could kill you with a well-placed kick, but I could not tackle the gendarmes and the soldiers. Now, make no noise. Where do you want to take me?'

'To Monsieur Camusot.'

'Come along to Monsieur Camusot,' replied Jacques Collin. 'Why should we not go to the public prosecutor's court? It is nearer,' he added.

Bibi-Lupin, who knew that he was out of favour with the upper ranks of judicial authorities, and suspected of having made a fortune at the expense of criminals and

their victims, was not unwilling to show himself in Court with so notable a capture.

'All right, we will go there,' said he. 'But as you surrender, allow me to fit you with bracelets. I am afraid of your claws.'

And he took the handcuffs out of his pocket.

Jacques Collin held out his hands, and Bibi-Lupin snapped on the manacles.

'Well, now, since you are feeling so good,' said he, 'tell me how you got out of the Conciergerie?'

'By the way you came; down the turret stairs.'

'Then have you taught the gendarmes some new trick?'

'No, Monsieur de Granville let me out on parole.'

'You are gammoning me?'

'You will see. Perhaps it will be your turn to wear the bracelets.'

Just then Corentin was saying to Monsieur de Granville—

'Well, Monsieur, it is just an hour since our man set out; are you not afraid that he may have fooled you? He is on the road to Spain perhaps by this time, and we shall not find him there, for Spain is a whimsical kind of country.'

'Either I know nothing of men, or he will come back; he is bound by every interest; he has more to look for at my hands than he has to give.'

Bibi-Lupin walked in.

'Monsieur le Comte,' said he, 'I have good news for you. Jacques Collin, who had escaped, has been recaptured.'

'And this,' said Jacques Collin, addressing Monsieur de Granville, 'is the way you keep your word!—Ask your double-faced agent where he took me.'

'Where?' said the public prosecutor.

'Close to the Court, in the vaulted passage,' said Bibi-Lupin.

'Take your irons off the man,' said Monsieur de Granville sternly. 'And remember that you are to leave him free till further orders.—Go!—You have a way of moving and acting as if you alone were law and police in one.'

The public prosecutor turned his back on Bibi-Lupin, who became deadly pale, especially at a look from Jacques Collin, in which he read disaster.

'I have not been out of this room. I expected you back, and you cannot doubt that I have kept my word, as you kept yours,' said Monsieur de Granville to the convict.

'For a moment I did doubt you, sir, and in my place perhaps you would have thought as I did, but on reflection I saw that I was unjust. I bring you more than you can give me; you had no interest in betraying me.'

The magistrate flashed a look at Corentin. This glance, which could not escape Trompe-la-Mort, who was watching Monsieur de Granville, directed his attention to the strange little old man sitting in an armchair in a corner. Warned at once by the swift and anxious instinct that scents the presence of an enemy, Collin examined this figure; he saw at a glance that the eyes were not so old as the costume would suggest, and he detected a disguise. In one second Jacques Collin was revenged on Corentin for the rapid insight with which Corentin had unmasked him at Peyrade's.

'We are not alone!' said Jacques Collin to Monsieur de Granville.

'No,' said the magistrate drily.

'And this gentleman is one of my oldest acquaintances, I believe,' replied the convict.

He went forward, recognising Corentin, the real and confessed originator of Lucien's overthrow.

Jacques Collin, whose face was of a brick-red hue, for a scarcely perceptible moment turned white, almost ashy; all his blood rushed to his heart, so furious and

maddening was his longing to spring on this dangerous reptile and crush it ; but he controlled the brutal impulse, suppressing it with the force that made him so formidable. He put on a polite manner and the tone of obsequious civility which he had practised since assuming the garb of a priest of a superior Order, and he bowed to the little old man.

'Monsieur Corentin,' said he, 'do I owe the pleasure of this meeting to chance, or am I so happy as to be the cause of your visit here ?'

Monsieur de Granville's astonishment was at its height, and he could not help staring at the two men who had thus come face to face. Jacques Collin's behaviour and the tone in which he spoke denoted a crisis, and he was curious to know the meaning of it. On being thus suddenly and miraculously recognised, Corentin drew himself up like a snake when you tread on its tail.

'Yes, it is I, my dear Abbé Carlos Herrera.'

'And are you here,' said Trompe-la-Mort, 'to interfere between Monsieur the public prosecutor and me ? Am I so happy as to be the object of one of those negotiations in which your talents shine so brightly ?—Here, Monsieur le Comte,' the convict went on, 'not to waste time so precious as yours is, read these—they are samples of my wares.'

And he held out to Monsieur de Granville three letters, which he took out of his breast-pocket.

'And while you are studying them, I will, with your permission, have a little talk with this gentleman.'

'You do me great honour,' said Corentin, who could not help giving a little shiver.

'You achieved a perfect success in our business,' said Jacques Collin. 'I was beaten,' he added lightly, in the tone of a gambler who has lost his money, 'but you left some men on the field—your victory cost you dear.'

'Yes,' said Corentin, taking up the jest, 'you lost your queen, and I lost my two castles.'

'Oh! Contenson was a mere pawn,' said Jacques Collin scornfully; 'you may easily replace him. You really are—allow me to praise you to your face—you are, on my word of honour, a magnificent man.'

'No, no, I bow to your superiority,' replied Corentin, assuming the air of a professional joker, as if he said, 'If you mean humbug, by all means humbug! I have everything at my command, while you are single-handed, so to speak.'

'Oh! Oh!' said Jacques Collin.

'And you were very near winning the day!' said Corentin, noticing the exclamation. 'You are quite the most extraordinary man I ever met in my life, and I have seen many very extraordinary men, for those I have to work with me are all remarkable for daring and bold scheming.

'I was, for my sins, very intimate with the late Duc d'Otranto; I have worked for Louis XVIII. when he was on the throne; and, when he was exiled, for the Emperor and for the Directory. You have the tenacity of Louvel, the best political instrument I ever met with; but you are as supple as the prince of diplomates. And what auxiliaries you have! I would give many a head to the guillotine if I could have in my service the cook who lived with poor little Esther.—And where do you find such beautiful creatures as the woman who took the Jewess's place for Monsieur de Nucingen? I don't know where to get them when I want them.'

'Monsieur, Monsieur, you overpower me,' said Jacques Collin. 'Such praise from you will turn my head——'

'It is deserved. Why, you took in Peyrade; he believed you to be a peace officer—he!—I tell you what, if you had not had that fool of a boy to take care of, you would have thrashed us.'

'Oh! Monsieur, but you are forgetting Contenson disguised as a mulatto, and Peyrade as an Englishman. Actors have the stage to help them, but to be so perfect

by daylight, and at all hours, no one but you and your men——'

'Come, now,' said Corentin, 'we are fully convinced of our worth and merits. And here we stand each of us quite alone. I have lost my old friend, you your young companion. I, for the moment, am in the stronger position, why should we not do like the men in *l'Auberge des Adrets*? I offer you my hand, and say, "Let us embrace, and let bygones be bygones." Here, in the presence of Monsieur le Comte, I propose to give you full and plenary absolution, and you shall be one of my men, the chief next to me, and perhaps my successor.'

'You really offer me a situation?' said Jacques Collin. 'A nice situation indeed!—out of the fire into the frying-pan!'

'You will be in a sphere where your talents will be highly appreciated and well paid for, and you will act at your ease. The Government police are not free from perils. I, as you see me, have already been imprisoned twice, but I am none the worse for that. And we travel, we are what we choose to appear. We pull the wires of political dramas, and are treated with politeness by very great people.—Come, my dear Jacques Collin, do you say yes?'

'Have you orders to act in this matter?' said the convict.

'I have a free hand,' replied Corentin, delighted at his own happy idea.

'You are trifling with me; you are very shrewd, and you must allow that a man may be suspicious of you.—You have sold more than one man by tying him up in a sack after making him go into it of his own accord. I know all your great victories—the Montauran case, the Simeuse business — the battles of Marengo of espionage.'

'Well,' said Corentin, 'you have some esteem for the public prosecutor?'

'Yes,' said Jacques Collin, bowing respectfully, 'I admire his noble character, his firmness, his dignity. I would give my life to make him happy. Indeed, to begin with, I will put an end to the dangerous condition in which Madame de Sérizy now is.'

Monsieur de Granville turned to him with a look of satisfaction.

'Then ask him,' Corentin went on, 'if I have not full power to snatch you from the degrading position in which you stand, and to attach you to me.'

'It is quite true,' said Monsieur de Granville, watching the convict.

'Really and truly! I may have absolution for the past and a promise of succeeding to you if I give sufficient evidence of my intelligence?'

'Between two such men as we are there can be no misunderstanding,' said Corentin, with a lordly air that might have taken anybody in.

'And the price of the bargain is, I suppose, the surrender of those three packets of letters?' said Jacques Collin.

'I did not think it would be necessary to say so to you——'

'My dear Monsieur Corentin,' said Trompe-la-Mort, with irony worthy of that which made the fame of Talma in the part of Nicomède, 'I beg to decline. I am indebted to you for the knowledge of what I am worth, and of the importance you attach to seeing me deprived of my weapons—I will never forget it.

'At all times and for ever I shall be at your service, but instead of saying with Robert Macaire, "Let us embrace!" I embrace you.'

He seized Corentin round the middle so suddenly that the other could not avoid the hug; he clutched him to his heart like a doll, kissed him on both cheeks, carried him like a feather with one hand, while with the other he opened the door, and then set him down outside, quite battered by this rough treatment.

'Good-bye, my dear fellow,' said Jacques Collin in a low voice, and in Corentin's ear: 'the length of three corpses parts you from me; we have measured swords, they are of the same temper and the same length. Let us treat each other with due respect; but I mean to be your equal, not your subordinate. Armed as you would be, it strikes me you would be too dangerous a general for your lieutenant. We will place a grave between us. Woe to you if you come over on to my territory!

'You call yourself the State, as footmen call themselves by their masters' names. For my part, I will call myself Justice. We shall often meet; let us treat each other with dignity and propriety—all the more because we shall always remain—atrocious blackguards,' he added in a whisper. 'I set you the example by embracing you——'

Corentin stood nonplussed for the first time in his life, and allowed his terrible antagonist to wring his hand.

'If so,' said he, 'I think it will be to our interest on both sides to remain chums.'

'We shall be stronger each on our own side, but at the same time more dangerous,' added Jacques Collin in an undertone. 'And you will allow me to call on you to-morrow to ask for some pledge of our agreement.'

'Well, well,' said Corentin amiably, 'you are taking the case out of my hands to place it in those of the public prosecutor. You will help him to promotion; but I cannot but own to you that you are acting wisely.—Bibi-Lupin is too well known; he has served his turn; if you get his place, you will have the only situation that suits you. I am delighted to see you in it—on my honour——'

'Till our next meeting, very soon,' said Jacques Collin.

On turning round, Trompe-la-Mort saw the public

prosecutor sitting at his table, his head resting on his hands.

'Do you mean that you can save the Comtesse de Sérizy from going mad?' asked Monsieur de Granville.

'In five minutes,' said Jacques Collin.

'And you can give me all those ladies' letters?'

'Have you read the three?'

'Yes,' said the magistrate vehemently, 'and I blush for the women who wrote them.'

'Well, we are now alone; admit no one, and let us come to terms,' said Jacques Collin.

'Excuse me, Justice must first take its course. Monsieur Camusot has instructions to seize your aunt.'

'He will never find her,' said Jacques Collin.

'Search is to be made at the Temple, in the house of a demoiselle Paccard who superintends her shop.'

'Nothing will be found there but rags, costumes, diamonds, uniforms—— However, it will be as well to check Monsieur Camusot's zeal.'

Monsieur de Granville rang, and sent an office messenger to desire Monsieur Camusot to come and speak with him.

'Now,' said he to Jacques Collin, 'an end to all this! I want to know your recipe for curing the Countess.'

'Monsieur le Comte,' said the convict very gravely, 'I was, as you know, sentenced to five years' penal servitude for forgery. But I love my liberty.—This passion, like every other, had defeated its own end, for lovers who insist on adoring each other too fondly end by quarrelling. By dint of escaping and being recaptured alternately, I have served seven years on the hulks. So you have nothing to remit but the added terms I earned in quod—I beg pardon, in prison. I have, in fact, served my time, and till some ugly job can be proved against me—which I defy Justice to do, or even Corentin—I ought to be reinstated in my rights as a French citizen.

'What is life if I am banned from Paris and subject to the eye of the police? Where can I go, what can I do? You know my capabilities. You have seen Corentin, that storehouse of treachery and wile, turn ghastly pale before me, and doing justice to my powers.—That man has bereft me of everything; for it was he, and he alone, who overthrew the edifice of Lucien's fortunes, by what means and in whose interest I know not.—Corentin and Camusot did it all——'

'No recriminations,' said Monsieur de Granville; 'give me the facts.'

'Well, then, these are the facts. Last night, as I held in my hand the icy hand of that dead youth, I vowed to myself that I would give up the mad contest I have kept up for twenty years past against society at large.

'You will not believe me capable of religious sentimentality after what I have said of my religious opinions. Still, in these twenty years I have seen a great deal of the seamy side of the world. I have known its back-stairs, and I have discerned, in the march of events, a Power which you call Providence and I call Chance, and which my companions call Luck. Every evil deed, however quickly it may hide its traces, is overtaken by some retribution. In this struggle for existence, when the game is going well—when you have quint and quatorze in your hand and the lead—the candle tumbles over and the cards are burnt, or the player has a fit of apoplexy!—That is Lucien's story. That boy, that angel, had not committed the shadow of a crime; he let himself be led, he let things go! He was to marry Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, to be made marquis; he had a fine fortune;—well, a prostitute poisons herself, she hides the price of a certificate of stock, and the whole structure so laboriously built up crumbles in an instant!

'And who is the first man to deal a blow? A man

loaded with secret infamy, a monster who, in the world of finance, has committed such crimes that every coin of his vast fortune has been dipped in the tears of a whole family [see *la Maison Nucingen*]—by Nucingen, who has been a legalised Jacques Collin in the world of money. However, you know as well as I do all the bankruptcies and tricks for which that man deserves hanging. My fetters will leave a mark on all my actions, however virtuous. To be a shuttlecock between two racquets—one called the hulks, and the other the police—is a life in which success means never-ending toil, and peace and quiet seem quite impossible.

'At this moment, Monsieur de Granville, Jacques Collin is buried with Lucien, who is being now sprinkled with holy water and carried away to Père-Lachaise. What I want is a place not to live in, but to die in. As things are, you, representing Justice, have never cared to make the released convict's social status a concern of any interest. Though the law may be satisfied, society is not; society is still suspicious, and does all it can to justify its suspicions; it regards a released convict as an impossible creature; it ought to restore him to his full rights, but, in fact, it prohibits his living in certain circles. Society says to the poor wretch, "Paris, which is the only place you can be hidden in; Paris and its suburbs for so many miles round is the forbidden land, you shall not live there!" and it subjects the convict to the watchfulness of the police. Do you think that life is possible under such conditions? To live, the convict must work, for he does not come out of prison with a fortune.

'You arrange matters so that he is plainly ticketed, recognised, hedged round, and then you fancy that his fellow-citizens will trust him, when society and justice and the world around him do not. You condemn him to starvation or crime. He cannot get work, and is inevitably dragged into his old ways, which lead to the scaffold.

'Thus, while earnestly wishing to give up this struggle with the law, I could find no place for myself under the sun. One course alone is open to me, that is to become the servant of the power which crushes us; and as soon as this idea dawned on me, the Power of which I spoke was shown in the clearest light. Three great families are at my mercy. Do not suppose I am thinking of blackmail—blackmail is the meanest form of murder. In my eyes it is baser villainy than murder. The murderer needs, at any rate, atrocious courage. And I practise what I preach; for the letters which are my safe-conduct, which allow me to address you thus, and for the moment place me on an equality with you—I, Crime, and you, Justice—those letters are in your power. Your messenger may fetch them, and they will be given up to him.

'I ask no price for them; I do not sell them. Alas! Monsieur le Comte, I was not thinking of myself when I preserved them; I thought that Lucien might some day be in danger! If you cannot agree to my request, my courage is out; I hate life more than enough to make me blow out my own brains and rid you of me!—Or, with a passport, I can go to America and live in the wilderness. I have all the characteristics of a savage.

'These are the thoughts that came to me in the night.—Your clerk, no doubt, carried you a message I sent by him. When I saw what precautions you took to save Lucien's memory from any stain, I dedicated my life to you—a poor offering, for I no longer cared for it; it seemed to me impossible without the star that gave it light, the happiness that glorified it, the thought that gave it meaning, the prosperity of the young poet who was its sun—and I determined to give you the three packets of letters——'

Monsieur de Granville bowed his head.

'I went down into the prison-yard, and there I found the persons guilty of the Nanterre crime, as well as my little chain companion within an inch of the chopper as

an involuntary accessory after the fact,' Jacques Collin went on. 'I discovered that Bibi-Lupin is cheating the authorities, that one of his men murdered the Crottats. Was not this providential, as you say ?—So I perceived a remote possibility of doing good, of turning my gifts and the dismal experience I have gained to account for the benefit of society, of being useful instead of mischievous, and I ventured to confide in your judgment, your generosity.'

The man's air of candour, of artlessness, of childlike simplicity, as he made his confession, without bitterness, or that philosophy of vice which had hitherto made him so terrible to hear, was like an absolute transformation. He was no longer himself.

'I have such implicit trust in you,' he went on, with the humility of a penitent, 'that I am wholly at your mercy. You see me with three roads open to me—suicide, America, and the Rue de Jérusalem. Bibi-Lupin is rich; he has served his turn; he is a double-faced rascal. And if you set me to work against him, I would catch him red-handed in some trick within a week. If you will put me in that sneak's shoes, you will do society a real service. I will be honest. I have every quality that is needed in the profession. I am better educated than Bibi-Lupin; I went through my schooling up to rhetoric; I shall not blunder as he does; I have very good manners when I choose. My sole ambition is to become an instrument of order and repression instead of being the incarnation of corruption. I will enlist no more recruits to the army of vice.

'In war, Monsieur, when a hostile general is captured, he is not shot, you know; his sword is returned to him, and his prison is a large town; well, I am the general of the hulks, and I have surrendered.—I am beaten, not by the law, but by death. The sphere in which I crave to live and act is the only one that is suited to me, and there I can develop the powers I feel within me.

'Decide.'

And Jacques Collin stood in an attitude of diffident submission.

'You place the letters in my hands, then?' said the public prosecutor.

'You have only to send for them; they will be delivered to your messenger.'

'But how?'

Jacques Collin read the magistrate's mind, and kept up the game.

'You promised me to commute the capital sentence on Calvi for twenty years' penal servitude. Oh, I am not reminding you of that to drive a bargain,' he added eagerly, seeing Monsieur de Granville's expression; 'that life should be safe for other reasons, the lad is innocent——'

'How am I to get the letters?' asked the public prosecutor. 'It is my right and my business to convince myself that you are the man you say you are. I must have you without conditions.'

'Send a man you can trust to the Flower Market on the quay. At the door of a tinman's shop, under the sign of Achilles' shield——'

'That house?'

'Yes,' said Jacques Collin, smiling bitterly, 'my shield is there.—Your man will see an old woman dressed, as I told you before, like a fish-woman who has saved money—earrings in her ears, and clothes like a rich market-woman's. He must ask for Madame de Saint-Estève. Do not omit the *de*. And he must say, "I have come from the public prosecutor to fetch you know what."—You will immediately receive three sealed packets.'

'All the letters are there?' said Monsieur de Granville.

'There is no tricking you; you did not get your place for nothing!' said Jacques Collin, with a smile. 'I see you still think me capable of testing you and

giving you so much blank paper.—No; you do not know me,' said he. 'I trust you as a son trusts his father.'

'You will be taken back to the Conciergerie,' said the magistrate, 'and there await a decision as to your fate.'

Monsieur de Granville rang, and said to the office-boy who answered—

'Beg Monsieur Garnery to come here, if he is in his room.'

Besides the forty-eight police commissioners who watch over Paris like forty-eight petty Providences, to say nothing of the guardians of Public Safety—and who have earned the nickname of *quart d'œil*, in thieves' slang, a quarter of an eye, because there are four of them to each district,—besides these, there are two commissioners attached equally to the police and to the legal authorities, whose duty it is to undertake delicate negotiations, and not unfrequently to serve as deputies to the examining judges. The office of these two magistrates, for police commissioners are also magistrates, is known as the Delegates' office; for they are, in fact, delegated on each occasion, and formally empowered to carry out inquiries or arrests.

These functions demand men of ripe age, proved intelligence, great rectitude, and perfect discretion; and it is one of the miracles wrought by Heaven in favour of Paris, that some men of that stamp are always forthcoming. Any description of the Palais de Justice would be incomplete without due mention of these *preventive* officials, as they may be called, the most powerful adjuncts of the law; for though it must be owned that the force of circumstances has abrogated the ancient pomp and wealth of justice, it has materially gained in many ways. In Paris especially its machinery is admirably perfect.

Monsieur de Granville had sent his secretary, Monsieur de Chargebœuf, to attend Lucien's funeral; he needed

a substitute for this business, a man he could trust, and Monsieur Garnery was one of the commissioners in the Delegates' office.

'Monsieur,' said Jacques Collin, 'I have already proved to you that I have a sense of honour. You let me go free, and I came back.—By this time the funeral mass for Lucien is ended; they will be carrying him to the grave. Instead of remanding me to the Conciergerie, give me leave to follow the boy's body to Père-Lachaise. I will come back and surrender myself prisoner.'

'Go,' said Monsieur de Granville, in the kindest tone.

'One word more, Monsieur. The money belonging to that girl—Lucien's mistress—was not stolen. During the short time of liberty you allowed me, I questioned her servants. I am as sure of them as you are of your two commissioners of the Delegates' office. The money paid for the certificate sold by Mademoiselle Esther Gobseck will certainly be found in her room when the seals are removed. Her maid remarked to me that the deceased was given to mystery-making, and very distrustful; she no doubt hid the bank-notes in her bed. Let the bedstead be carefully examined and taken to pieces, the mattresses unsewn—the money will be found.'

'You are sure of that?'

'I am quite sure of the relative honesty of my rascals; they never play any tricks on me. I hold the power of life and death; I try and condemn them and carry out my sentence without all your formalities. You can see for yourself the results of my authority. I will recover the money stolen from Monsieur and Madame Crottat; I will hand you over one of Bibi-Lupin's men, his right hand, caught in the act; and I will tell you the secret of the Nanterre murders. This is not a bad beginning. And if you only employ me in the service of the law and the police, by the end of a year you will be satisfied with all I can tell you. I will be thoroughly all that I

ought to be, and shall manage to succeed in all the business that is placed in my hands.'

'I can promise you nothing but my goodwill. What you ask is not in my power. The privilege of granting pardons is the King's alone, on the recommendation of the Keeper of the Seals; and the place you wish to hold is in the gift of the Préfet of Police.'

'Monsieur Garnery,' the office-boy announced.

At a nod from Monsieur de Granville the Delegate commissioner came in, glanced at Jacques Collin as one who knows, and gulped down his astonishment on hearing the word 'Go!' spoken to Jacques Collin by Monsieur de Granville.

'Allow me,' said Jacques Collin, 'to remain here till Monsieur Garnery has returned with the documents in which all my strength lies, that I may take away with me some expression of your satisfaction.'

This absolute humility and sincerity touched the public prosecutor.

'Go,' said he; 'I can depend on you.'

Jacques Collin bowed humbly, with the submissiveness of an inferior to his master. Ten minutes later, Monsieur de Granville was in possession of the letters in three sealed packets that had not been opened! But the importance of this point, and Jacques Collin's avowal, had made him forget the convict's promise to cure Madame de Sérizy.

When once he was outside, Jacques Collin had an indescribable sense of satisfaction. He felt he was free, and born to a new phase of life. He walked quickly from the Palais to the Church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where mass was over. The coffin was being sprinkled with holy water, and he arrived in time thus to bid farewell, in a Christian fashion, to the mortal remains of the youth he had loved so well. Then he got into a carriage and drove after the body to the cemetery.

In Paris, unless on very exceptional occasions, or when some famous man has died a natural death, the crowd that gathers about a funeral diminishes by degrees as the procession approaches Père-Lachaise. People make time to show themselves in church; but every one has his business to attend to, and returns to it as soon as possible. Thus of ten mourning carriages, only four were occupied. By the time they reached Père-Lachaise there were not more than a dozen followers, among whom was Rastignac.

'That is right; it is well that you are faithful to him,' said Jacques Collin to his old acquaintance.

Rastignac started with surprise at seeing Vautrin.

'Be calm,' said his old fellow-boarder at Madame Vauquer's. 'I am your slave, if only because I find you here. My help is not to be despised; I am, or shall be, more powerful than ever. You slipped your cable, and you did it very cleverly; but you may need me yet, and I will always be at your service.'

'But what are you going to do?'

'To supply the hulks with lodgers instead of lodging there,' replied Jacques Collin.

Rastignac gave a shrug of disgust.

'But if you were robbed——'

Rastignac hurried on to get away from Jacques Collin.

'You do not know what circumstances you may find yourself in.'

They stood by the grave dug by the side of Esther's.

'Two beings who loved each other, and who were happy!' said Jacques Collin. 'They are united.—It is some comfort to rot together. I will be buried here.'

When Lucien's body was lowered into the grave, Jacques Collin fell in a dead faint. This strong man could not endure the light rattle of the spadefuls of earth thrown by the gravediggers on the coffin as a hint for their payment.

Just then two men of the corps of Public Safety came up; they recognised Jacques Collin, lifted him up, and carried him to a hackney coach.

'What is up now?' asked Jacques Collin when he recovered consciousness and had looked about him.

He saw himself between two constables, one of whom was Ruffard; and he gave him a look which pierced the murderer's soul to the very depths of la Gonore's secret.

'Why, the public prosecutor wants you,' replied Ruffard, 'and we have been hunting for you everywhere, and found you in the cemetery, where you had nearly taken a header into that boy's grave.'

Jacques Collin was silent for a moment.

'Is it Bibi-Lupin that is after me?' he asked the other man.

'No. Monsieur Garnery sent us to find you.'

'And he told you nothing?'

The two men looked at each other, holding council in expressive pantomime.

'Come, what did he say when he gave you your orders?'

'He bid us fetch you at once,' said Ruffard, 'and said we should find you at the Church of Saint-Germain des Prés; or, if the funeral had left the church, at the cemetery.'

'The public prosecutor wants me?'

'Perhaps.'

'That is it,' said Jacques Collin; 'he wants my assistance.'

And he relapsed into silence, which greatly puzzled the two constables.

At about half-past two Jacques Collin once more went up to Monsieur de Granville's room, and found there a fresh arrival in the person of Monsieur de Granville's predecessor, the Comte Octave de Bauvan, one of the Presidents of the Court of Appeals.

'You forgot Madame de Sérizy's dangerous condition, and that you had promised to save her.'

'Ask these rascals in what state they found me, Monsieur,' said Jacques Collin, signing to the two constables to come in.

'Unconscious, Monsieur, lying on the edge of the grave of the young man they were burying.'

'Save Madame de Sérizy,' said the Comte de Bauvan, 'and you shall have what you will.'

'I ask for nothing,' said Jacques Collin. 'I surrendered at discretion, and Monsieur de Granville must have received——'

'All the letters, yes,' said the magistrate. 'But you promised to save Madame de Sérizy's reason. Can you? Was it not a vain boast?'

'I hope I can,' replied Jacques Collin modestly.

'Well, then, come with me,' said Comte Octave.

'No, Monsieur; I will not be seen in the same carriage by your side—I am still a convict. It is my wish to serve the Law; I will not begin by discrediting it. Go back to the Countess; I will be there soon after you. Tell her Lucien's best friend is coming to see her, the Abbé Carlos Herrera; the anticipation of my visit will make an impression on her and favour the cure. You will forgive me for assuming once more the false part of a Spanish priest; it is to do so much good!'

'I shall find you there at about four o'clock,' said Monsieur de Granville, 'for I have to wait on the King with the Keeper of the Seals.'

Jacques Collin went off to find his aunt, who was waiting for him on the Quai aux Fleurs.

'So you have given yourself up to the authorities?' said she.

'Yes.'

'It is a risky game.'

'No; I owed that poor Théodore his life, and he is reprieved.'

'And you?'

'I—I shall be what I ought to be. I shall always make our set shake in their shoes.—But we must get to work. Go and tell Paccard to be off as fast as he can go, and see that Europe does as I told her.'

'That is a trifle; I know how to deal with la Gonore,' said the terrible Jacqueline. 'I have not been wasting my time here among the gilliflowers.'

'Let Ginetta, the Corsican girl, be found by to-morrow,' Jacques Collin went on, smiling at his aunt.

'I shall want some clue.'

'You can get it through Manon la Blonde,' said Jacques.

'Then we meet this evening,' replied the aunt; 'you are in such a deuce of a hurry. Is there a fat job on?'

'I want to begin with a stroke that will beat everything that Bibi-Lupin has ever done. I have spoken a few words to the brute who killed Lucien, and I live only for revenge! Thanks to our positions, he and I shall be equally strong, equally protected. It will take years to strike the blow, but the wretch shall have it straight in the heart.'

'He must have vowed a Roland for your Oliver,' said the aunt, 'for he has taken charge of Peyrade's daughter, the girl who was sold to Madame Nourrisson, you know.'

'Our first point must be to find him a servant.'

'That will be difficult; he must be tolerably wide awake,' observed Jacqueline.

'Well, hatred keeps one alive! We must work hard.'

Jacques Collin took a cab and drove at once to the Quai Malaquais, to the little room he lodged in, quite separate from Lucien's apartment. The porter, greatly astonished at seeing him, wanted to tell him all that had happened.

'I know everything,' said the Abbé. 'I have been

involved in it, in spite of my saintly reputation; but, thanks to the intervention of the Spanish Ambassador, I have been released.'

He hurried up to his room, where, from under the cover of a breviary, he took out a letter that Lucien had written to Madame de Sérizy after that lady had discarded him on seeing him at the opera with Esther.

Lucien, in his despair, had decided on not sending this letter, believing himself cast off for ever; but Jacques Collin had read the little masterpiece; and as all that Lucien wrote was to him sacred, he had treasured the letter in his prayer-book for its poetical expression of a passion that was chiefly vanity. When Monsieur de Granville told him of Madame de Sérizy's condition, the keen-witted man had very wisely concluded that this fine lady's despair and frenzy must be the result of the quarrel she had allowed to subsist between herself and Lucien. He knew women as magistrates know criminals; he guessed the most secret impulses of their hearts; and he at once understood that the Countess probably ascribed Lucien's death partly to her own severity, and reproached herself bitterly. Obviously a man on whom she had shed her love would never have thrown away his life!—To know that he had loved her still, in spite of her cruelty, might restore her reason.

If Jacques Collin was a grand general of convicts, he was, it must be owned, a not less skilful physician of souls.

This man's arrival at the mansion of the Sérizys was at once a disgrace and a promise. Several persons, the Count, and the doctors were assembled in the little drawing-room adjoining the Countess's bedroom; but to spare him this stain on his soul's honour, the Comte de Bauvan dismissed everybody, and remained alone with his friend. It was bad enough even then for the Vice-President of the Privy Council to see this gloomy and sinister visitor come in.

Jacques Collin had changed his dress. He was in black with trousers, and a plain frock-coat, and his gait, his look, and his manner were all that could be wished. He bowed to the two statesmen, and asked if he might be admitted to see the Countess.

'She awaits you with impatience,' said Monsieur de Bauvan.

'With impatience! Then she is saved,' said the dreadful magician.

And, in fact, after an interview of half an hour, Jacques Collin opened the door and said—

'Come in, Monsieur le Comte; there is nothing further to fear.'

The Countess had the letter clasped to her heart; she was calm, and seemed to have forgiven herself. The Count gave expression to his joy at the sight.

'And these are the men who settle our fate and the fate of nations,' thought Jacques Collin, shrugging his shoulders behind the two men. 'A female has but to sigh in the wrong way to turn their brain as if it were a glove! A wink, and they lose their head! A petticoat raised a little higher, dropped a little lower, and they rush round Paris in despair! The whims of a woman react on the whole country. Ah, how much stronger is a man when, like me, he keeps far away from this childish tyranny, from honour ruined by passion, from this frank malignity, and wiles worthy of savages! Woman, with her genius for ruthlessness, her talent for torture, is, and always will be, the marring of man. The public prosecutor, the minister—here they are, all hoodwinked, all moving the spheres for some letters written by a duchess and a chit, or to save the reason of a woman who is more crazy in her right mind than she was in her delirium.'

And he smiled haughtily.

'Ay,' said he to himself, 'and they believe in me! They act on my information, and will leave me in power.

I shall still rule the world which has obeyed me these five-and-twenty years.'

Jacques Collin had brought into play the overpowering influence he had exerted of yore over poor Esther; for he had, as has often been shown, the mode of speech, the look, the action which quell madmen, and he had depicted Lucien as having died with the Countess's image in his heart.

No woman can resist the idea of having been the one beloved.

'You now have no rival,' had been this bitter jester's last words.

He remained a whole hour alone and forgotten in that little room. Monsieur de Granville arrived and found him gloomy, standing up, and lost in a brown study, as a man may well be who makes an 18th Brumaire in his life.

The public prosecutor went to the door of the Countess's room, and remained there a few minutes; then he turned to Jacques Collin and said—

'You have not changed your mind?'

'No, Monsieur.'

'Well, then, you will take Bibi-Lupin's place, and Calvi's sentence will be commuted.'

'And he is not to be sent to Rochefort?'

'Not even to Toulon; you may employ him in your service. But these reprieves and your appointment depend on your conduct for the next six months as subordinate to Bibi-Lupin.

Within a week Bibi-Lupin's new deputy had helped the Crottat family to recover four hundred thousand francs, and had brought Ruffard and Godet to justice.

The price of the certificates sold by Esther Gobseck was found in the courtesan's mattress, and Monsieur de Sérizy handed over to Jacques Collin the three hundred thousand francs left to him bv Lucien de Rubempré.

The monument erected by Lucien's orders for Esther and himself is considered one of the finest in Père-Lachaise, and the earth beneath it belongs to Jacques Collin.

After exercising his functions for about fifteen years, Jacques Collin retired in 1845.

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END OF VOL. II.

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